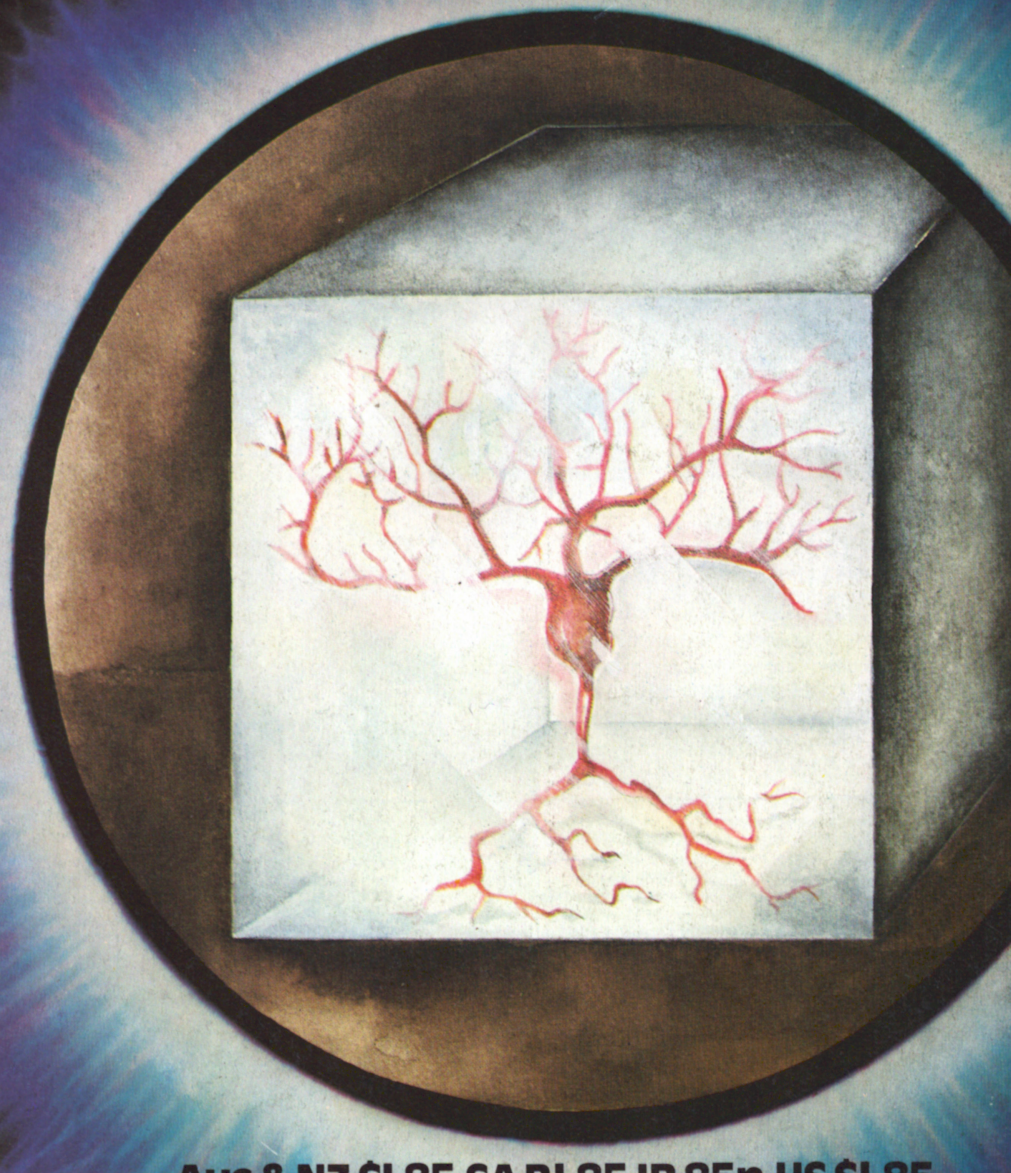
65p

# THE Unexplained

MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

135

News from Ummo
Amazing French poltergeist
Bloxham tapes debunked?
Observation theory
A new twist to PK



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# THE Unexplained
MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

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## In next week's issue

Of all the alleged alien abduction stories few are as compelling as that of **Betty and Barney Hill**, whose strange close encounter we reassess.

When the 'prophetess' **Joanna Southcott** announced that she was expecting to give birth to the Messiah on Christmas Day – even though she was 64 years old – there was upheaval among her followers. Is there such a thing as an accidental happening, or are we all the pawns of fate? In **Coincidences** we consider yet more evidence of the apparent purposefulness of life.

Once he was interested in the paranormal, **Andrija Puharich** cast his net wide, investigating UFOs and psychic surgeons – and then he met an obscure Israeli called Uri Geller . . . If ESP and PK are independent of space and time can they take an active part in the past? We analyse the **Observation theories**.

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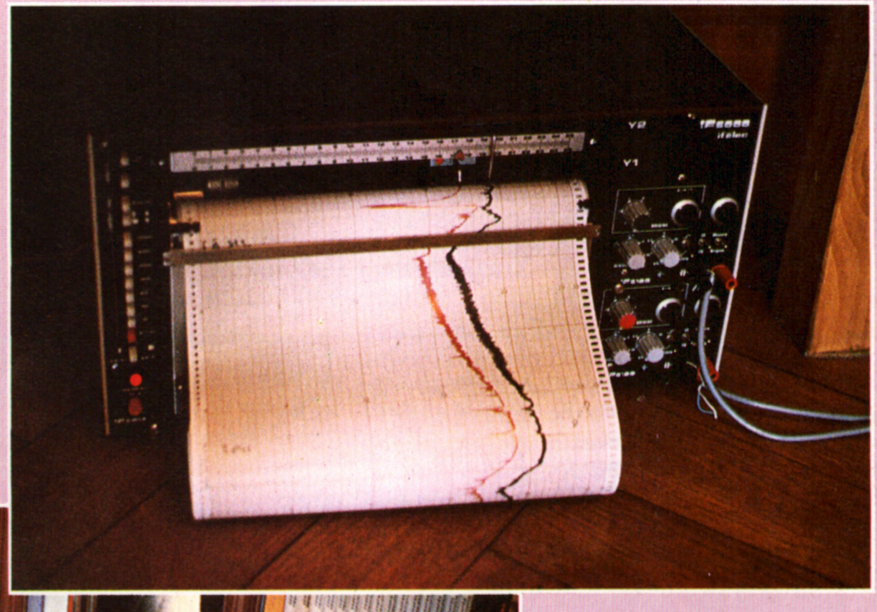
# A pinch and a punch

**A poltergeist that had plagued a young French family for three years with bizarre phenomena proved resistant to all attempts by parapsychologists to dislodge it.**
**ELMAR GRUBER and SUSAN FASSBERG report**

ONE DAY IN NOVEMBER 1980 staff at the Freiburg Institute for Border Areas of Psychology and Mental Hygiene, in West Germany, received an urgent telephone call asking them to investigate an unusual and complex poltergeist case. The caller was a Dr Fleur, a physicist, who had been investigating the case but felt in need of expert advice. He had heard of the institute's director, Professor Hans Bender (familiarly known as the 'poltergeist professor'), whose tenacity in investigating poltergeist phenomena is well known (see page 1541), and he hoped to interest Bender in the case at Mulhouse, in France, with which he was concerned. Professor Bender listened carefully while Dr Fleur outlined the facts.

The case concerned a couple in their mid thirties who were living with their young son Jean, aged four, in a ground-floor apartment in Mulhouse. Thierry, the husband, was a technical designer and painter; his wife, Carla, was Spanish-born but had been living in Mulhouse since the age of 15. For the past three years they had been plagued by poltergeist activity. The manifestations occurred at least three times a week and included the sound of knocking at the windows (also heard by other witnesses), of cars crashing, babies crying and animals whimpering; a heavy table was seen 'dancing', pillows and sheets were pulled away from the bed during the night, and the bed itself sometimes moved. Abrupt changes of temperature in the apartment were reported, and it was sometimes as hot as 80°F (27°C) when the heating was turned off. To monitor the temperature changes Dr Fleur had installed a chart recorder, which would record the temperature continuously on a graphic read-out – but the resulting print-out was in a form that the machine was not (technically speaking) capable of producing.

These manifestations, together with others that Fleur described, were classic poltergeist phenomena; they were teasing, playful, sometimes threatening, and at all



Above: the chart recorder installed by Dr Fleur to record the extraordinary fluctuations in temperature in the poltergeist-stricken apartment. Although designed to produce continuous lines on graph paper, the machine somehow produced broken lines and several 'impossible' horizontal lines

Left: Professor Bender talking to Thierry and Carla on his first visit to the apartment at Mulhouse

A glass-rolling session being recorded by Professor Bender. It was at sessions such as these that Carla and Thierry had attempted to communicate with their poltergeist trickster, 'Henri'

times disruptive. The most unusual aspect of the case however was that the activity had been going on for three years. Such a long-lived case was almost unheard of and, as the investigators from the institute were later to discover, this poltergeist was also downright aggressive. Thierry and Carla were seriously concerned for their little son's mental health, and it was easy to see why Dr Fleur found the situation alarming.

### Plan of campaign

It is always a difficult exercise in these cases to devise a strategy that will both document the phenomena and at the same time get rid of them. Nevertheless, in the hope of achieving these aims, the investigators from the institute agreed on the following plan of action. They would interview the family and any other witnesses, and examine the notes Thierry had kept since 1978; they would install a continuously running tape recorder in the apartment for several nights; and they would conduct a hypnosis experiment in the hope of producing observable phenomena. This experiment was planned in two parts. In the first part, Carla would be hypnotised and given the suggestion that something 'observable' would happen later in the evening. For the second part of the experiment, radar equipment (provided by Dr Fleur) was to be placed in a locked room, where it would monitor objects on a table (the objects were to be ones that had already been moved by poltergeist activity, according to the family). If any of the objects moved, the radar equipment would activate a ciné camera, which would then film the objects for 10 seconds. It was hoped that post-hypnotic suggestion might produce psychokinetic movement of prepared targets, in the way that the Swedish psychiatrist Dr Paul Bjerre had produced poltergeist phenomena in the famous Karin case of 1904 (see box).

When the investigators from the institute visited Mulhouse for the first time they were warmly welcomed by Thierry and Carla, who were obviously under great stress. They naturally hoped that the Freiburg team would be able to find an explanation for the unnerving phenomena in their apartment, and rid them of whatever it was that was causing all the turmoil.

The couple described how, at the suggestion of friends, they had begun to practise glass rolling when the poltergeist activity first began. Glass rolling is a variation on the ouija board: the letters of the alphabet are arranged in a circle on a table, and the participants place their fingers on an inverted glass, which then moves and touches the letters, sometimes spelling out intelligible words. In the course of these sessions the couple often received words in Spanish, which would seem to indicate a connection with Carla; but her curiosity and genuine surprise at the results seemed to indicate that this was not a case of trickery. They had attempted to communicate with the unknown trickster in the apartment through glass rolling; it appeared that he was called Henri, but the messages they received from him were often silly.

Apart from hearing about Henri, the investigators learned a good deal about Carla's background on that first visit to Mulhouse. She had begun to sleepwalk as a child of three; at the age of five she was known to have an uncanny ability to recognise pregnant

## Trance and trauma

In September 1904 a Swedish psychiatrist Dr Paul Bjerre and his colleague Mr Wijk went to investigate the strange knockings that were disturbing a young couple living in a villa in south Sweden. The knockings seemed to come from inside the walls and floors, and to follow the wife, Karin, as she walked from room to room.

Karin and her husband had, like Carla and Thierry, dabbled in glass rolling, and Karin had been quite successful in receiving messages. But the glass rolling also brought on attacks of weakness and trembling, similar to ones Karin had suffered from some years earlier. The attacks left her exhausted and unable to speak or move.

During the glass-rolling sessions a character had appeared called 'Piscator'. He addressed Karin in terms that were familiar and impertinent, and declared his love for her in violent terms. Karin was extremely upset by this manifestation, as she believed him to be a product of her own subconscious.

The couple had moved into their new house six months earlier, and on the first night Karin's husband had to be away on business. Karin heard knockings during

women, being able to detect a pregnancy even in its earliest stages. As a child, she had been playing one day with some friends in the kitchen of an empty house when they were frightened by loud noises. When they rushed to the door, they were dismayed to find it could not be opened – even though there was no lock. The children cried out for help, and eventually the door was opened (without any difficulty) by a passer-by. Carla said that she had experienced extra-sensory perception several times since childhood. She had had premonitions of her grandmother's death, and had had a detailed vision of a serious accident involving her brother just before it happened. Carla clearly had some psychic powers. Thierry, on the other hand, said that he had never exhibited any paranormal tendencies; he was plainly distraught and was considering selling the apartment.

### Centre of activity

An examination of Thierry's journal showed that Carla was the person around whom the activity seemed to centre. She was almost always present when something strange occurred – apart from one occasion. She and Thierry had gone to the cinema, and on their return they found that the drawing-room table had moved; it was quite 3 feet (1 metre) away from where it had stood before.

An outstanding feature of the case was the amount of hostility directed towards Carla by the poltergeist. In his journal for 1978 the night, but assumed they were caused by her guests sleeping downstairs. On the second night she heard knockings again, about every two hours, and this time they were also heard by the maid sleeping in the house.

Dr Bjerre believed that it might be possible to probe an individual's unconscious through hypnosis, and so produce, modify or stop psychic phenomena.

The first time Karin was hypnotised she proved to be an excellent subject. During the second session she fell into a deep hypnotic sleep; she was asked whether she could see Piscator, and she replied, 'No, he is far away.' But she did say she could see an old woman dressed in grey.

Later the same afternoon Karin was hypnotised again. Asked 'Is it Piscator who is knocking, or the old lady?' she answered, 'It is him, but the old lady as well.' Bjerre asked if Piscator wanted to appear. She said, 'Yes.'

'When?'

'That depends on you.'

Dr Bjerre suggested that Piscator should come at 11 o'clock that evening, and knock three times.

The evening passed without incident. Then, at 11 p.m. precisely, three loud knocks were heard, and then three knocks three times more. When they went into the couple's room, Bjerre and Wijk found Karin in great distress. Her arms were shaking convulsively, and she whispered, 'It's Piscator.' A few minutes later she had returned to her normal state, and could not remember the words she had just spoken.

In a second session Bjerre suggested that Piscator should come at 9.30 p.m. and knock three times. About 8 p.m. Karin started to get uneasy; by 9 p.m. she was showing signs of stress. Shortly before 9.30 p.m. Karin sat down near Bjerre and Wijk, who had seated themselves near the light, to see if Piscator would make an appearance in spite of the light (he usually preferred the dark). At 9.30 faint knockings began, and continued for several minutes. Afterwards, Karin was quite calm, and showed surprise that anything had happened, since 'no one had thought of provoking the knocks that evening.'

Other sessions were inconclusive; but it certainly seemed that on at least two occasions hypnosis produced results.

Above left: a friend of the family in front of the door to the outhouse in which Carla had twice found herself mysteriously imprisoned, although the door had no lock

Above: the hypnosis experiment, in which Carla was hypnotised and given the suggestion that paranormal phenomena would occur after she awoke from her trance

Carla and Thierry's bed (top), under which the investigators found markings on the floor (above) similar to ones that had appeared earlier on Carla's thigh

Thierry wrote: 'Carla sometimes feels punched in the stomach. She has received strong pinches on her leg . . . the black marks are visible the next day.' He also said that scratches had been seen on her face and arms, and cuts on her arms had been discovered when she woke in the morning. She had felt trapped in bed as if held down by 'strong arms' and had twice felt 'cold hands' attempting to strangle her – the marks remained on her neck for two or three days and were seen by other witnesses. She had been given a black eye, and had felt a 'strong force' take hold of her leg and pull it. 'She said,' Thierry's journal recorded, 'that if she hadn't held on to the bed she would have been thrown on to the floor': for several days following this incident Carla limped.

The journal entries for 1979 showed that the aggression towards Carla was becoming less violent and less frequent. Nevertheless, she still endured many unpleasant experiences. She twice found herself trapped in the outhouse (although the door had no lock). Cupboard doors closed brutally on her fingers, and she was showered with olive stones that 'fell from nowhere'. Articles of clothing disappeared, to reappear months later in strange places, such as draped over a painting. One afternoon while she was cleaning Jean's room, Carla heard a noise in the kitchen. When she ran to the bedroom door and opened it, she saw a small rug (which normally lay just inside the kitchen door) gliding down the hall. It was slightly levitated, and Carla watched it move up and down the length of the hall three times.

The house in Mulhouse where Carla and Thierry lived in the ground-floor apartment

After visiting Mulhouse several times, the investigators agreed to proceed with the hypnosis experiment (even Henri was consulted and gave his consent). A hypnotist named Gaston living in the Mulhouse region agreed to undertake the hypnosis. The first evening Carla was hypnotised, she did not go into a deep trance, but nevertheless M. Gaston suggested to her that 'something observable' would happen during the evening, and he added the post-hypnotic suggestion that the 'agent' might be kind enough to do something between 8.30 and 9 p.m.

When 9 p.m. came, however, nothing out of the ordinary had happened. After dinner Carla, Thierry, M. Gaston and Dr Fleur sat down together at the glass-rolling table, and asked Henri why he was being so uncooperative. The response spelt out 'no . . . no . . . no'. All at once, M. Gaston went into a semi-trance, with deep breathing; he spoke to the others and said that he had heard a message: 'The bed, the bed.' Carla ran to the bedroom, but found everything in its place.

However, when the bed was moved, two designs were found drawn on the floor with a marker – a cross inside a circle and a triangle. Five days earlier, similar designs had been found drawn on Carla's thigh. The bookshelves in the living room were then checked (they were a popular playground for the poltergeist) and, even though he had checked the shelves earlier in the day, Thierry now found that three books had been turned upside down.

It was impossible to establish exactly when the drawings on the floor had been made. Carla said that the bed had been moved two days earlier when the room was cleaned, and at that time the floor was unmarked. She said she always made a point of checking under the bed, because the previous year markings had been found on the floor three nights in succession. It was also not clear whether the words heard by M. Gaston had any real connection with the experiment; perhaps he had perceived the markings clairvoyantly before the hypnosis session and the glass rolling.

### PK on film?

The investigators from the institute met again in Mulhouse two weeks later to conduct a second hypnosis experiment. This time they hoped they would be able to film PK phenomena produced by post-hypnotic suggestion. Dr Fleur set up his radar equipment and camera to monitor the objects arranged on a table, and the room was locked. If any of the objects on the table were to move even half an inch (1 centimetre) the equipment would trigger the camera and it would film for 10 seconds.

Carla was put into a deep hypnotic trance. She was then given the suggestion that Henri should 'move the table or any of the objects on it'. Everybody sat down to wait. By 1 a.m. nothing had happened, and the investigators, somewhat disappointed, drove home.

Half an hour later, just as Carla and Thierry were on the point of going to bed, the camera was triggered and started to film. Instead of stopping after 10 seconds it ran and ran, until after three minutes Thierry decided to switch it off at the electric point, which was located outside the room. However, when it was developed, the film did not show any movement of the target objects: it seemed that something else had affected the radar equipment or triggered the camera. After examining all the equipment carefully Dr Fleur reported simply that the relay that should have cut the electrical current after 10 seconds had got stuck. Was this pure chance? Or yet another teasing manifestation of the poltergeist? All that could be said was that the event seemed in keeping with the investigators' expectations that they would encounter difficulties with the hypnosis experiment.

After the first hypnosis experiment, Thierry checked his bookshelves and found several of his books turned upside down

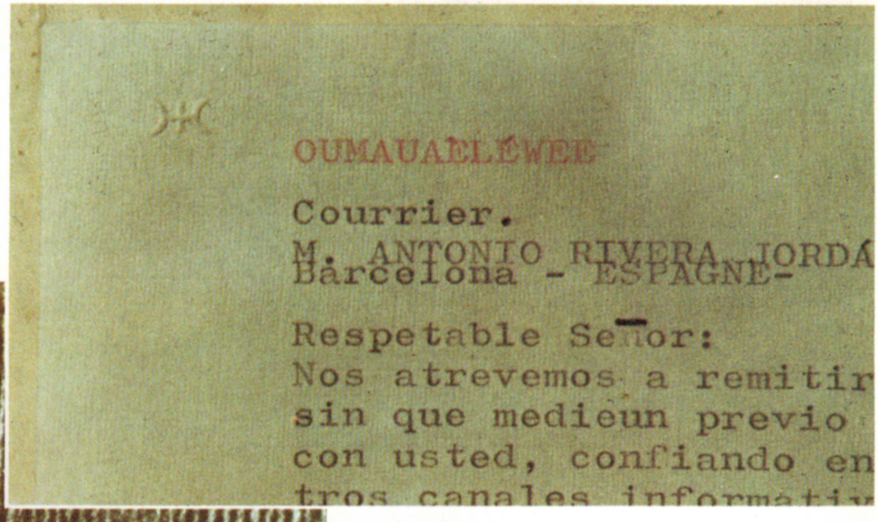
Carla in the hallway of her apartment, pointing to the small rug that she had seen move back and forth the length of the hall three times

In the weeks following the experiment the activities of the poltergeist seemed to be on the increase again. Young Jean began to talk in his sleep. He claimed to hear music when others could not (as did Carla at times). Jean also told his parents about 'visitors' who came to his bedside at night, or when he was playing with his toys. At last, in a final desperate bid for help, Carla and Thierry sought the advice of an exorcist, who promised he would visit them as soon as his other engagements permitted. With the prospect of his help in the near future, they breathed a little more easily.

*Thierry and Carla flee to the other side of the world. See page 2726*

# The Ummites tell all

**In 1967 a group of Madrid ufologists began to receive a series of extraordinary letters and telephone calls from creatures who insisted that they hailed from the planet Ummo, 14 light years away. HILARY EVANS assesses the truth of their claim**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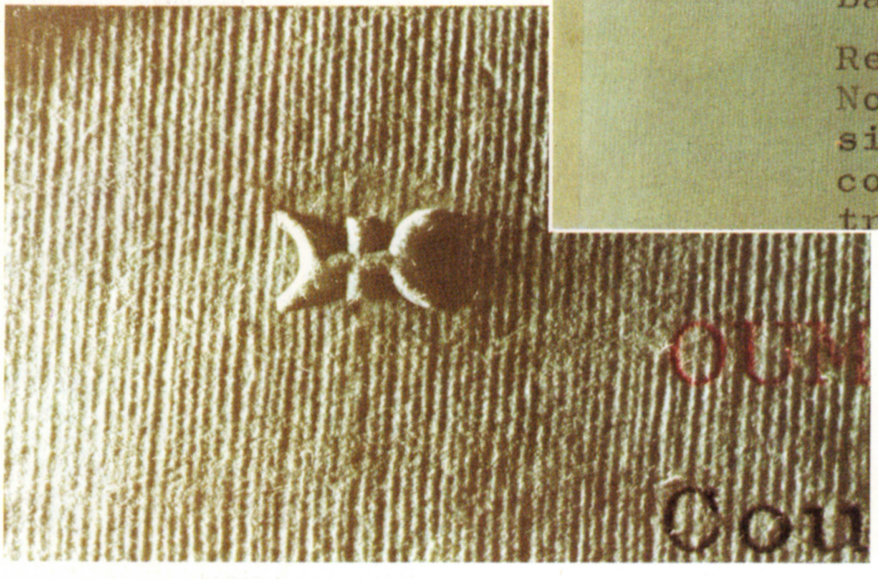


THE UMMO AFFAIR is riddled with doubtful aspects. While its supporters argue that it involves more contact with extra-terrestrials than any other case before, it appears that the most contact anyone actually had was just a single telephone call.

However, there may have been one exception. Between 1967 and 1971 the members of the Madrid group received a letter from a man who claimed to be the Ummites' typist. Apparently, he had advertised for work in a newspaper and had subsequently been visited by two tall, fair-haired, respectably dressed men. They told him that they were Danish doctors and asked if he would type out scientific material for them on a regular basis.

Initially all went well, until the day he read the following sentence: 'We come from a celestial body named Ummo which is 14.6 light years from the Earth.' He took this at its face value and questioned the doctors; eventually they admitted that they were not Danish doctors at all, but extra-terrestrial visitors.

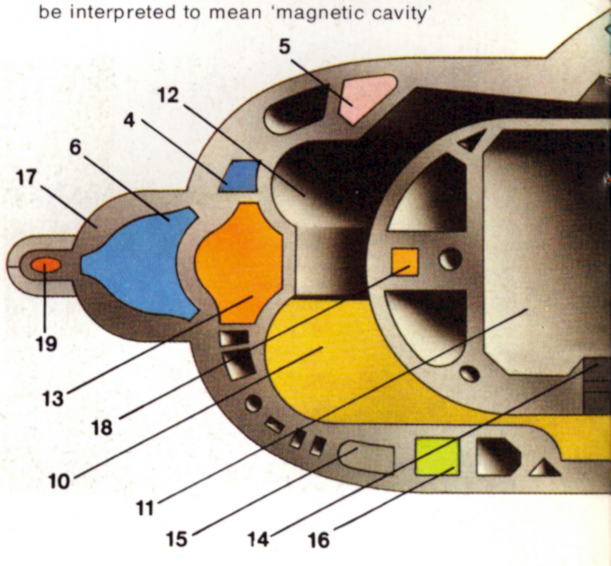
To prove their identity they produced a tiny sphere, just an inch or so in diameter, which one of them placed in mid-air before the typist. He looked into it and to his amazement saw a scene that had taken place in that same office on the preceding day when his wife, fearing that the Danish doctors might be spies, had advised him to go to the police. They apologised for invading his privacy, but said it was necessary for their own security.

The unnamed typist then wrote to the members of the Madrid group suggesting a meeting with them to discuss the matter; but this meeting did not actually take place – allegedly, the Ummites prevented it.

Unfortunately, not only is this all that we know of the alleged meeting between a

Top: one of the letters allegedly sent by aliens from the planet Ummo to Spain's leading ufologist, Antonio Ribera, and (above) a detail of the letter showing the Ummite symbol, which was also apparently seen on Ummite spaceships on two occasions. The letters, which were addressed to a number of people interested in UFOS, contained detailed descriptions of life on Ummo, and were followed up with a series of mysterious late-night telephone calls

1 *Ennoi:* transparent dome
2 *Ennaeoi:* main body of craft
3 *Duii:* ring around middle of craft
4 *Aaxoo xaiuu ayii:* magnetic field generator
5 *Nuuyaa:* tanks of oxygenated water and molten lithium
6 *Iduuwii ayii:* propulsion equipment
7 Energy generator. Transforms lithium and bismuth into energy, then into plasma
8 *Ibozooaidaa:* central control equipment
9 *Xanmoo:* outer calculators
10 *Taxee:* gelatinous mass
11 *Aayiyaa oayuu:* floating cabin
12 *Yaaxaiiu:* the original Ummite manuscript could be interpreted to mean 'magnetic cavity'



human and an Ummite, but the whole story is riddled with absurdities. What was there about the typescripts that made the typist's wife think the doctors might be spies? And why do we not know the typist's name? Yet if the story is untrue, how do we account for the fact that he had a list of the Ummites' correspondents? This suggests that he was responsible for typing and distributing the Ummite letters.

The majority of these letters were posted in Madrid, but not all of them. The first letter, sent to the ufologist Antonio Ribera, for example, was postmarked the Gare St Lazare in Paris: the other letters are known to have been sent from London, Germany, New Zealand, Austria, Canada and Yugoslavia.

Most of the letters were written in Spanish and the rest were in French, although it looks as though they were written by a Spaniard – occasionally the Spanish spelling of a word is used instead of the French, for example *sisteme* instead of *système* and *cientifique* instead of *scientifique*. Also, some of the French-language letters are devoid of grave accents, which suggests that they may have been typed on a Spanish machine because Spanish does not have this accent.

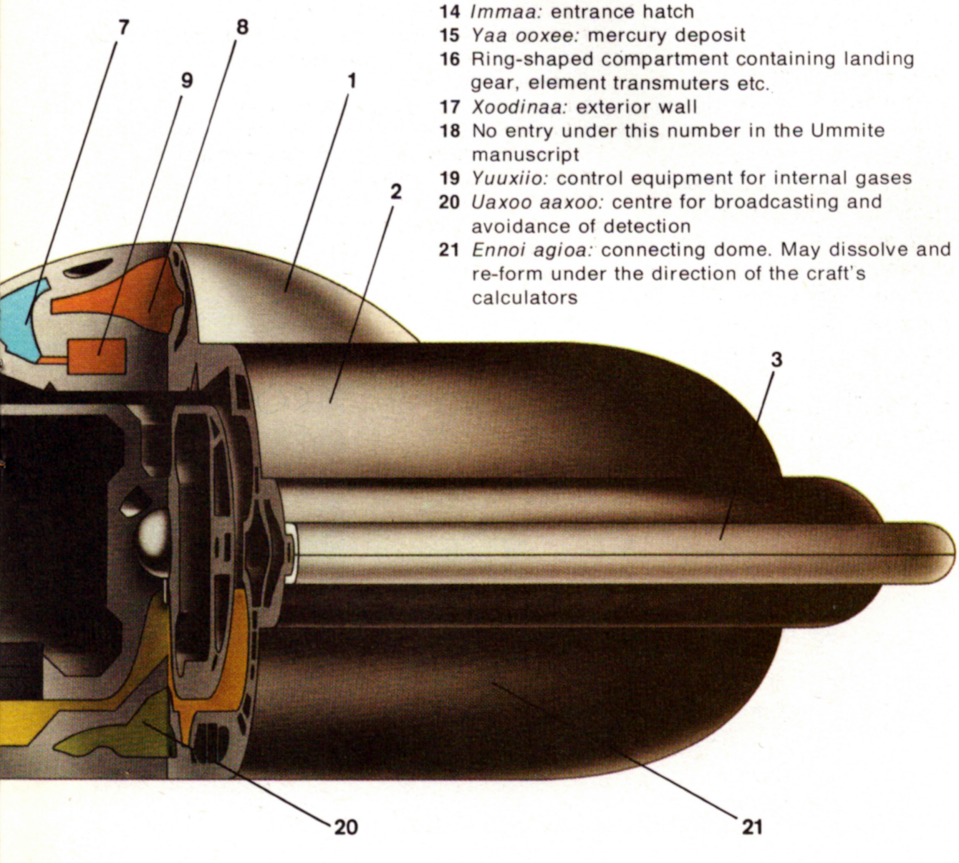
The telephone conversations, too, were conducted in Spanish and, since the discussion often referred to rather technical matters – for example, the Ummites discussed engineering with Enrique Villagrossa Novoa (see page 2661) – it would have been very difficult for anyone other than a fluent speaker of Spanish to use the correct terminology.

Only a small proportion of the Ummites' letters have been made publicly available, and these are formal monographs dealing with specific subjects. Of those that have been published, the two most detailed describe life on Ummo and the space vehicles that carried the Ummites to Earth.

Predictably, we are told that life on Ummo is in many respects superior to life on Earth; however, the differences are not so very great. As with so many other 'alien' worlds that we are said to have come into contact with, the Ummites do not seem to have discovered photography, nor understood how much we rely on photographic evidence. Consequently, they have given us much verbal description, but no proof. One photograph of an Ummite standing in front of his home would be so much more convincing but, sadly, there is no such photograph.

Apparently, the Ummites are very similar to human beings in shape and appearance, which certainly explains how they are able to survive on Earth with the minimum of adaptation, some of them even mingling with us disguised as Danish doctors! There are some minor physiological differences, such as their extremely sensitive fingers – which explains why they had to find someone else to do their typing for them, despite the threat to their security.

A diagram of an Ummite spaceship, allegedly supplied by the Ummites themselves. The ship, which the Ummites call 'Oawoolea Uewa Oemm', is apparently powered by a mixture of bismuth and lithium – which is, to say the least, remarkable for a vessel capable of negotiating the perils of interstellar space




13 Cavity containing part of the magnetic field generator
14 *Immaa:* entrance hatch
15 *Yaa ooxee:* mercury deposit
16 Ring-shaped compartment containing landing gear, element transmuters etc.
17 *Xoodinaa:* exterior wall
18 No entry under this number in the Ummite manuscript
19 *Yuuxiio:* control equipment for internal gases
20 *Uaxoo aaxoo:* centre for broadcasting and avoidance of detection
21 *Ennoi agioa:* connecting dome. May dissolve and re-form under the direction of the craft's calculators

### Telepathic communication

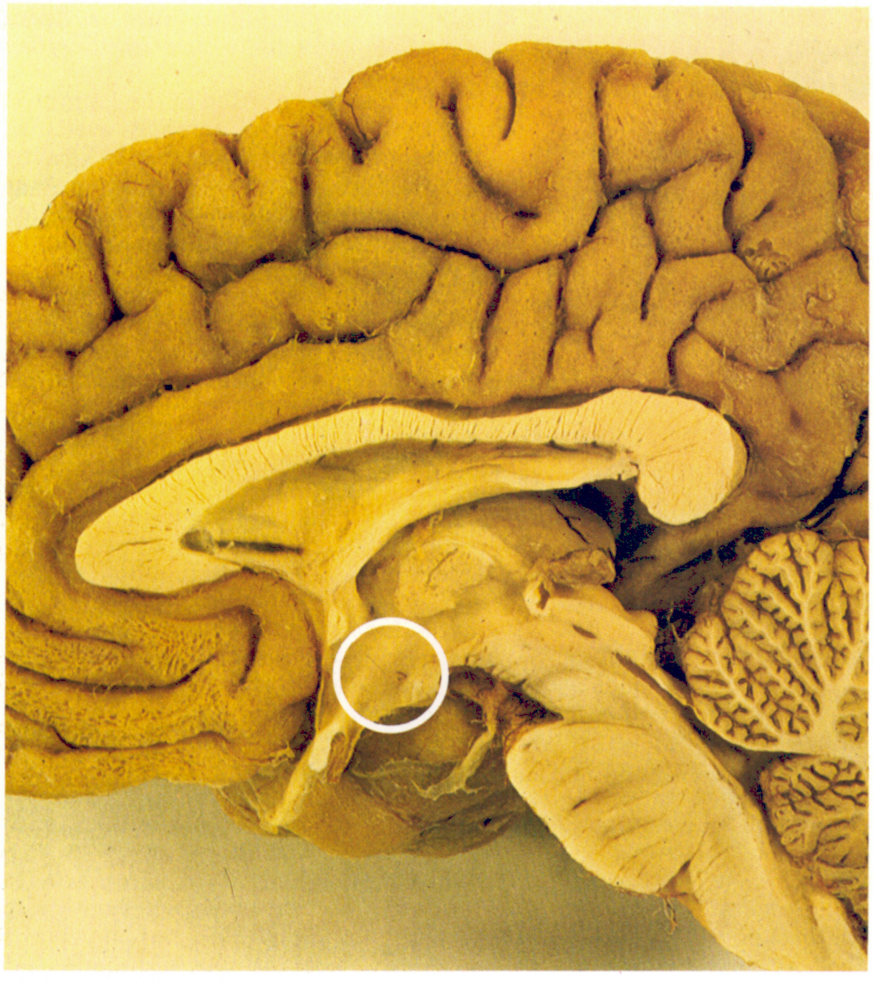
The most significant physical difference between ourselves and the Ummites is that, during their puberty, both sexes' vocal cords are so severely affected that speech becomes impossible. Adults therefore communicate by telepathy. The group sent to Earth was selected from the few exceptional individuals who remain immune to this impediment.

Other minor differences include the Ummites' sense of smell, which is so highly developed that they have made an art form out of blending perfumes together so cleverly that we, unfortunately, cannot appreciate these delightfully subtle effects.

The Ummites' religious attitudes are informed by a belief in the soul and in a creator-God; the body and the soul are linked by a chain of 84 crypton atoms in the hypothalamus (a part of the brain that regulates the body's temperature). When an eminent French physiologist heard about this, he declared that he would investigate the matter, but his findings have still to be announced.

At the age of 13.7, Ummite children leave the family for teaching centres, where they are prepared for adult life.

There are no taboos about public nudity on Ummo, and they have a guiltless approach to sex. If someone is suspected of being ashamed of being seen naked, any of his superiors can order him to strip to get him



certain vowels in a specific sequence. Somewhat apprehensively he did as instructed, taking the precaution of filming the operation.

When he uttered the vowels the little screen became illuminated, and inside the doctor saw a live specimen of a nerve cell. He uttered more sounds and other specimens appeared. Unfortunately, he was not allowed to keep the device, which was collected by the Ummites' emissary – none other than the mysterious typist. The doctor did, however, keep the film but, since the name of the doctor has been withheld, we do not know what happened to it or, indeed, whether there is a scrap of truth in the entire story.

The Ummites also claim that our understanding of physics is woefully simple; although our physicists are starting to research into the fourth dimension, this is child's play to the Ummites, who make practical use of at least 10 dimensions and are aware of many more.

They also believe that the subatomic particles that our physicists are continually 'discovering' are illusions. Apparently, these phenomena result from the different positions of the three axes that comprise what the Ummites call 'ibozoo uu' – their model of the fundamental physical particle.

The Ummo scripts contain a wealth of such stimulating ideas – it certainly sounds impressive enough, but nothing has been substantiated. Take, for example, their ingenious account of how they are able to take

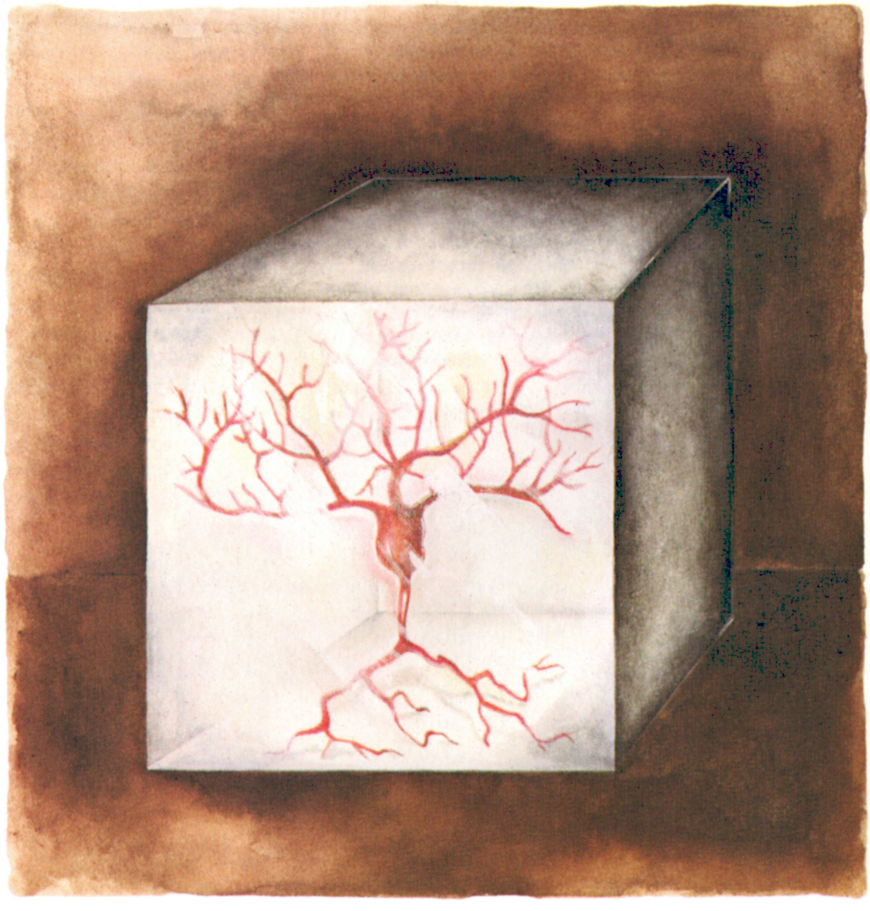
used to the idea. One imagines that such a practice would tend to induce self-consciousness rather than eliminate it, but this approach is apparently successful.

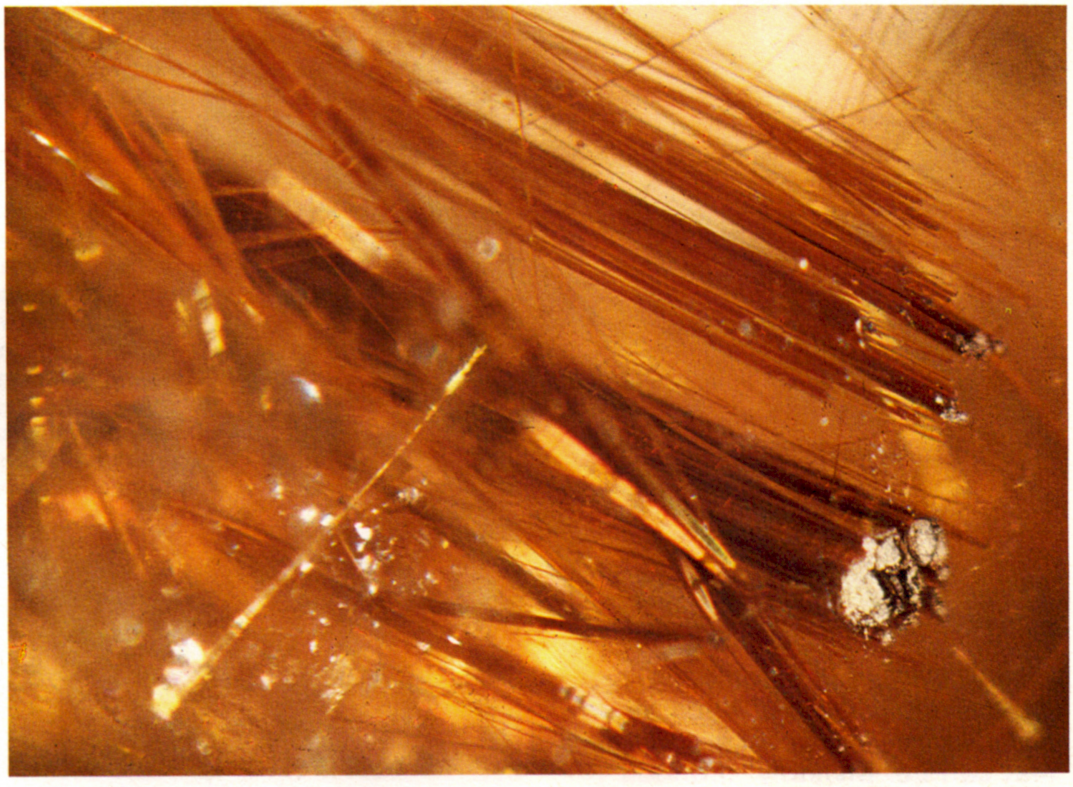
Those who have seen the Ummite scripts have noted that they are relatively free from preaching, and the patronising tone that other allegedly extra-terrestrial messages usually contain.

The Ummites do not encourage us to abandon nuclear power, to become vegetarians, or to love one another more. Reading between the lines, one senses a thread of disapproval of some of our behaviour, but they certainly do not want us to give up our life-style for theirs.

Although the Ummites' technology does not enable them to take photographs, in all other ways it is more sophisticated than ours. Their astronomical equipment picked up the messages transmitted by the Norwegian scientific research vessel at a distance of 14.6 light years (see page 2662), and their ability to launch a space expedition in two years puts NASA's best efforts to shame.

One item of Ummite technology was lent temporarily to one of their contacts, a professor in the faculty of medicine at Madrid University. He was sent a small package that contained a smooth, black, metallic-like cube; one side had a translucent screen. The accompanying instructions told him to utter





Left: a human brain, showing the hypothalamus – the part of the brain that regulates body temperature (ringed). Ummites are, perhaps surprisingly, apparently very similar in appearance to human beings – a fact that must have proved very convenient to them, as it seems to have enabled them to live undetected among humans for years. Ummites believe in the existence of a soul and in a creator-God; they also say that the body and soul are linked by a chain of 84 crypton atoms situated in the hypothalamus

Right: titanium, an immensely light and strong metal used extensively, on Earth, in structural parts of high-speed aeroplanes such as the Anglo-French supersonic Concorde. The Ummites, however, apparently use titanium, in crystal form, to store information at the atomic level in their computer systems

advantage of certain aspects of space, which we know nothing of, using folds and warps in the continuum to reduce enormous distances to manageable journeys.

According to the ufologist Antonio Ribera, he has seen blueprints of a number of useful devices provided by members of the Madrid group. They include a new type of altimeter, a sound recorder with no moving parts and, most impressive of all, computers based on titanium crystals that store information at the atomic level. These devices have enabled the Ummites, while on Earth, to collect and store information on most aspects of our civilisation. Apparently, this has been dispatched to Ummo.

### 'Oawoolea Uewa Oemm'

In 1976 a young French physicist – unnamed, as usual, but reputed to be 'of Nobel prize stature' – declared that the data provided in the 43-page typescript, in which the Ummites describe their spacecraft, would enable him to replicate it. He started work on the construction of what the Ummites call a 'Oawoolea Uewa Oemm', which we know as a flying saucer. A small experimental prototype was successfully constructed and is said to have worked. Unfortunately, no further communiqués have been issued.

Unsatisfactory as all this undoubtedly is, there is no doubt that the Ummite scripts are far superior to those issued by any other alleged extra-terrestrials. In addition, the 'tone of voice' behind the messages is much more intelligent than that of other extra-terrestrial communications – and, as already mentioned, far less patronising.

Antonio Ribera has said that 'we have watched the emergence of a structured language, with its own characteristic manner of forming adverbs and derivatives, with its verbs, its laws of grammar and so on. . . .' In fact, as anyone in any way acquainted with private languages must be aware, the language of Ummo is pathetically crude and inflexible: it does not begin to compare, for example, with the imaginary 'Martian' language created by Flournoy's patient Hélène Smith when she was in a trance state (see page 2602).

If the vocabulary of the Ummites is unconvincing, their sentence construction is totally ludicrous. Take, for example, this sentence: 'Do Ummo do do Ummo Ummo do do do', which is supposed to mean 'We have come from Ummo and we arrived with our vessel in the south of France.' Clearly, it cannot be translated word for word. So presumably its meaning is contained in the combination of sounds, just as the different arrangements of dots and dashes in the Morse code, or the binary code of a computer, encapsulate significant information. But even then it is not easy to believe that the sentence quoted above can mean what it does when 'Do Ummo Ummo do do Ummo' means 'We are from Ummo and we need food urgently.'

Ummospeak must be one of the least satisfactory aspects of this confusing business. But if the language of their scripts invalidates the communications themselves, and so those responsible for them, how much truth, is there – if any – in the Ummo affair?

*The perfect case or an ingenious government-inspired hoax – see page 2738*

Left: a professor in the faculty of medicine at Madrid University allegedly received through the post a small cube that was smooth, black and metallic on all sides but one; the remaining side had a translucent screen. Accompanying instructions told him to speak a certain sequence of vowels – upon which the little screen lit up, and the professor saw a live specimen of a nerve cell. It is said that the professor filmed the entire incident – but his name has been withheld, and the whereabouts of the film is unknown

ability to bend cutlery whenever required to do so. That first evening ended with seven pieces of bent or broken silverware. Still, the man who did it all had no idea how it happened, nor even why he was able to do it. His investigators were just as puzzled, and for other reasons. First, because it very much seemed that Silvio's attitude to these objects appeared to be one of sympathy and friendliness: he would fondle a spoon, showing obvious pleasure when it 'agreed' to weaken and bend. And second, because he not only bent coins, but he actually caused them to soften so much that he left his nail prints on them.

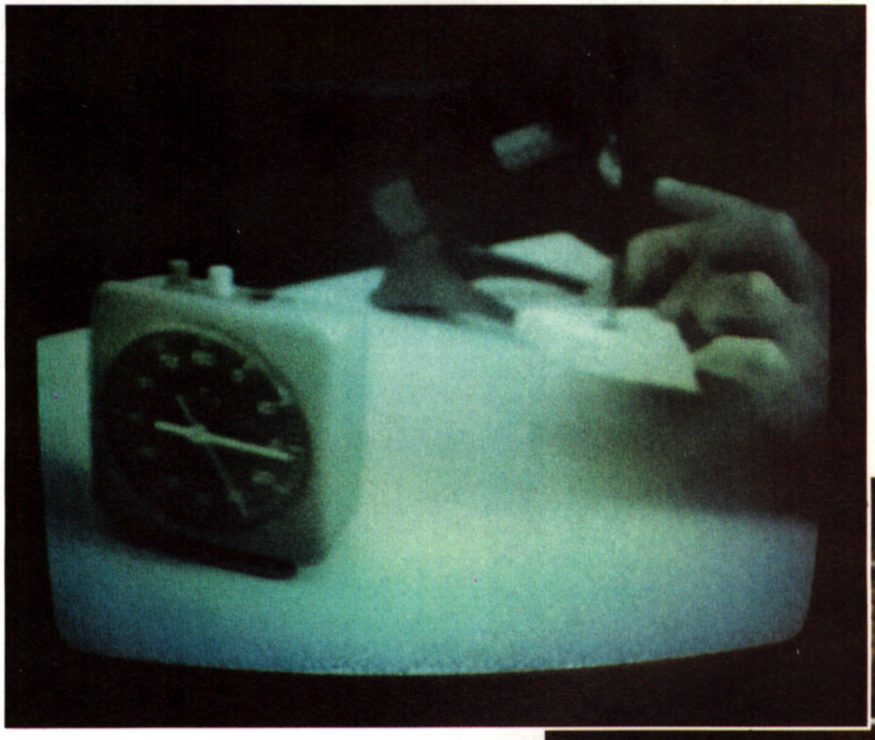
In Silvio's words: 'I just hold the object and wait. I can't do anything other than wait. Of course I want the spoon to bend, but it does not make any difference if I concentrate hard or if I just keep waiting.' And so he waited innumerable times in front of the research team's video cameras, and bent first one spoon, then another, and then another. 'It is as if something is coming towards me from very far away. I have to wait for it to come. Sometimes it comes; often it does not. But if it comes I can feel it get closer; it feels very close behind me, and then it is in me.' Silvio's heart starts to beat faster when he feels this power approaching, and so he is able to predict when the spoon will bend. One of the most extraordinary films on psychokinesis (PK) shows Silvio pointing his index finger towards the thinnest part of a coffee spoon, which is stuck into a piece of

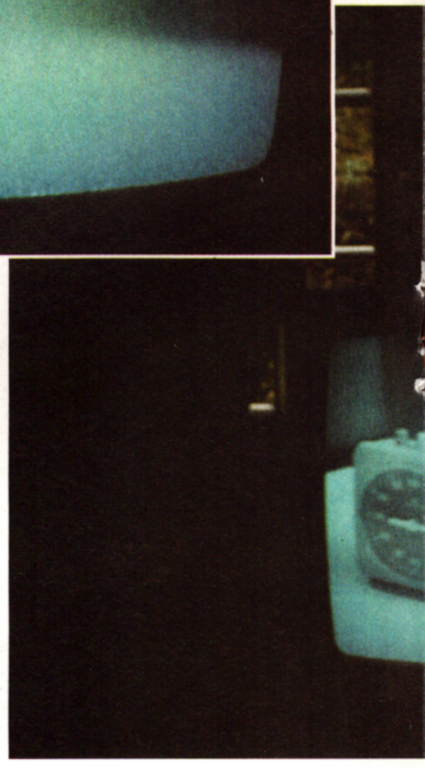
Left: Silvio stroking a spoon in an effort to bend it psychically. Often he will wait until he feels that the metal 'wants' to be bent before attempting to do so

Below, bottom, below right and right: part of a unique videotape showing the sequence of a coffee spoon being bent by Silvio *without touching it*; he merely points at the spot on the spoon handle that he intuitively feels is about to soften and eventually bend – which it does

# A new twist to PK

**Metal that bends when simply pointed at, coins that become as soft as putty, and broken cutlery that can be 'invisibly' mended – these and other astounding psychic feats by the Swiss Silvio Maier have been recorded.**
**ELMAR GRUBER reports**





IN THE EARLY 1970S the word 'paranormal' meant just one thing to most people – the metal-bending powers of Uri Geller. And then, gradually, other metal benders or the 'Gellerini' (as some Italians called the Geller imitators) started to appear, though many of them have never been heard of since. One who has not lost his powers is the psychic usually known simply as 'Silvio', from Bern, Switzerland.

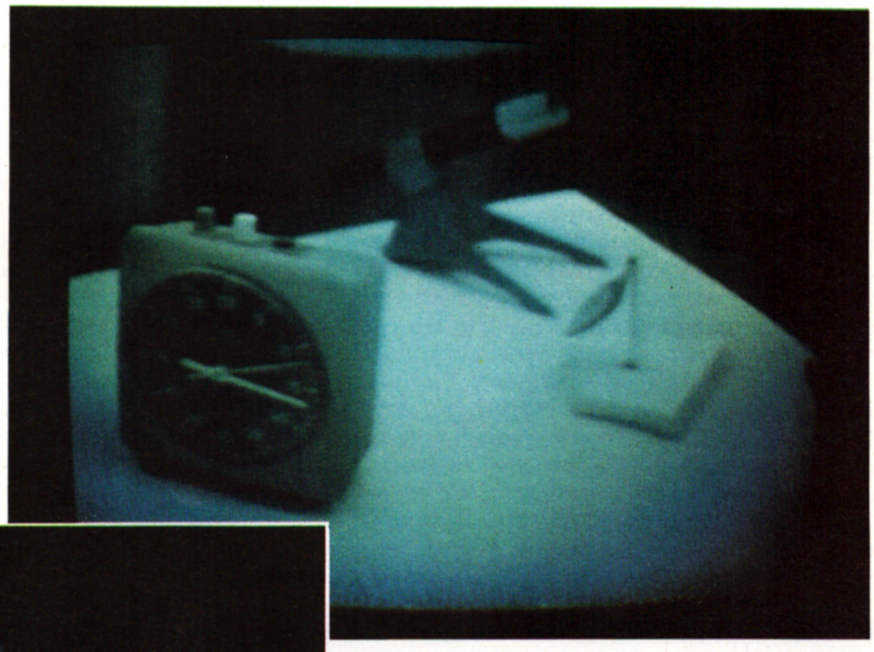
Silvio Maier became aware of his power accidentally, and was just as startled as his friends when he bent spoons in a restaurant one evening in 1974. To begin with it was just something of a game, albeit a most extraordinary one, and this quiet, sensible man had no idea how it would influence his life.

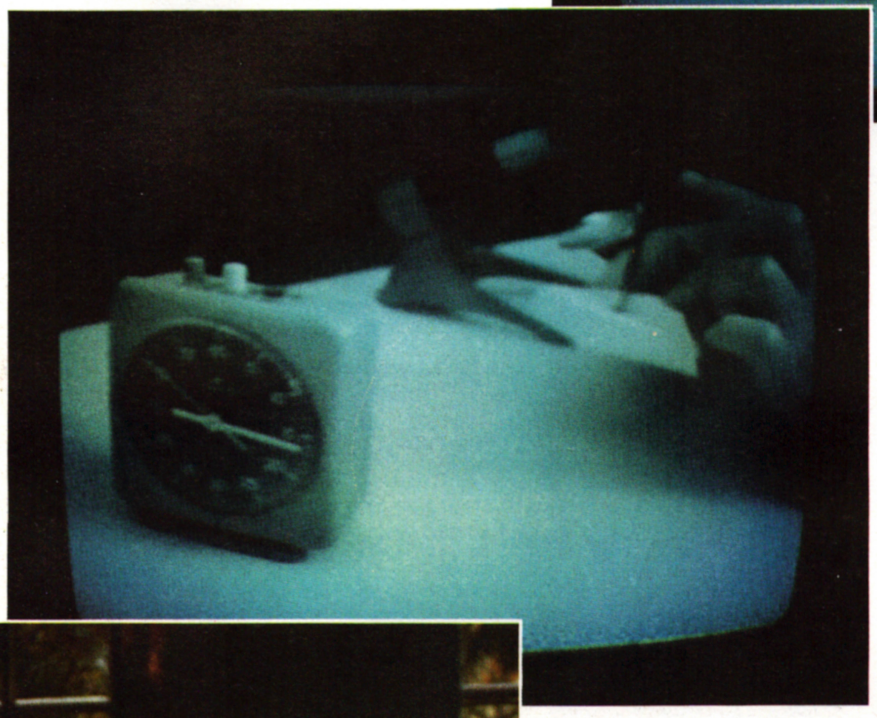
Soon afterwards a professional magician, Rolf Mayr (who had invented a considerable number of tricks to enable him to bend spoons and forks), approached Silvio after a local newspaper had carried a report on 'the Swiss Geller'. Mayr intended to disclose him as a fraud, but he ended up by telephoning Professor Hans Bender of the Freiburg Institute in Germany to tell him that Silvio's metal-bending performances deserved serious investigation.

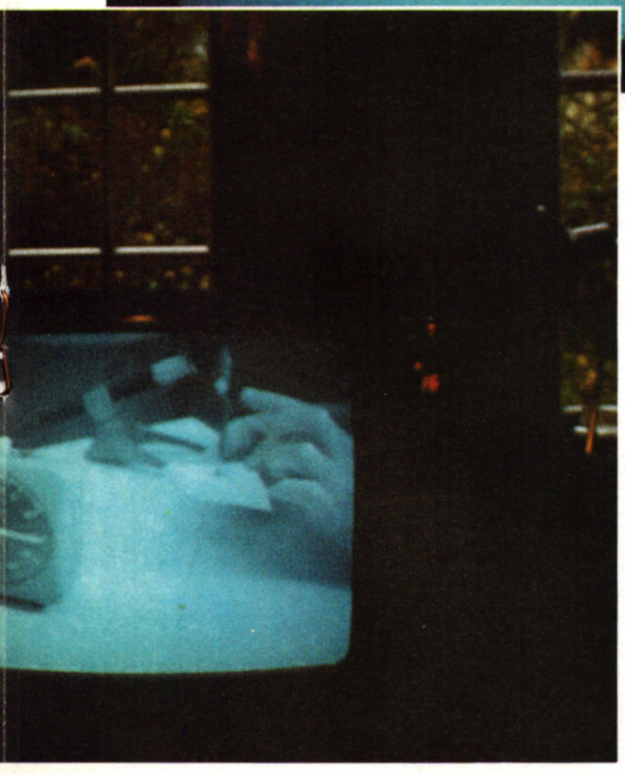
When Bender and his research team first met Silvio in December 1974, they encountered a tall man with a naïve, childlike enthusiasm. He was always very co-operative, demonstrating his remarkable

polystyrene, for a full 15 minutes. Then, the upper part of the spoon begins to bend and within a few seconds it has bent through 180° – without ever being touched.

This amazed the Freiburg parapsychologists, who replayed the tape over and over again. Equally enigmatic are the filmed instances of objects moved by PK on a flat surface. One piece of film shows Nina Kulagina, the Soviet psychic, succeeding in moving small objects without touching them, but only with great physical and mental effort. Yet such experiments do not involve Silvio's physical and mental strength. He simply waits, keeping his hands outstretched and motionless above a pencil, for example. Sometimes the pencil makes a sudden movement and then stops abruptly.







Researchers and magicians have tried in vain to reproduce these strange movements using mechanical means, and physicists have tried to find the secret of his power by analysing single frames of the film of these experiments. Unfortunately, this work has proved inconclusive.

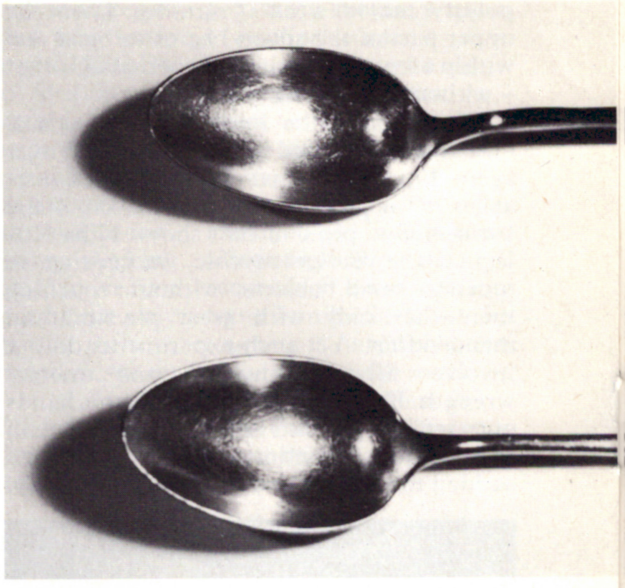
At the start of this long-term research project with Silvio, Professor Bender and his colleagues thought about ways of obtaining undisputable evidence to prove it is possible to bend a metal object using PK. The easiest way would have been to seal an object in a glass container and then ask Silvio to move the object without touching the container. But, although they attempted this experiment, it was doomed to fail, partly for psychological reasons. Silvio, like many other PK psychics, needs to have physical contact with the experimental object or, at

Right: the stage magician Rolf Meyr, who set out to expose Silvio as a fraud but actually recommended him to Professor Hans Bender of the Freiburg Institute as a genuine psychic worthy of investigation

least, the option of having it. This might be why Silvio never succeeded in moving a small piece of metal sealed in such a container. Eventually, a bottle was constructed that contained a spoon whose long handle stuck out of the sealed closure. This bottle was secured in several ways against attempts to tamper with it, including devices to indicate whether thermal, magnetic or mechanical means had been used to bend the part of the spoon inside the bottle. Unfortunately, every attempt to bend one of these spoons by PK has been unsuccessful.

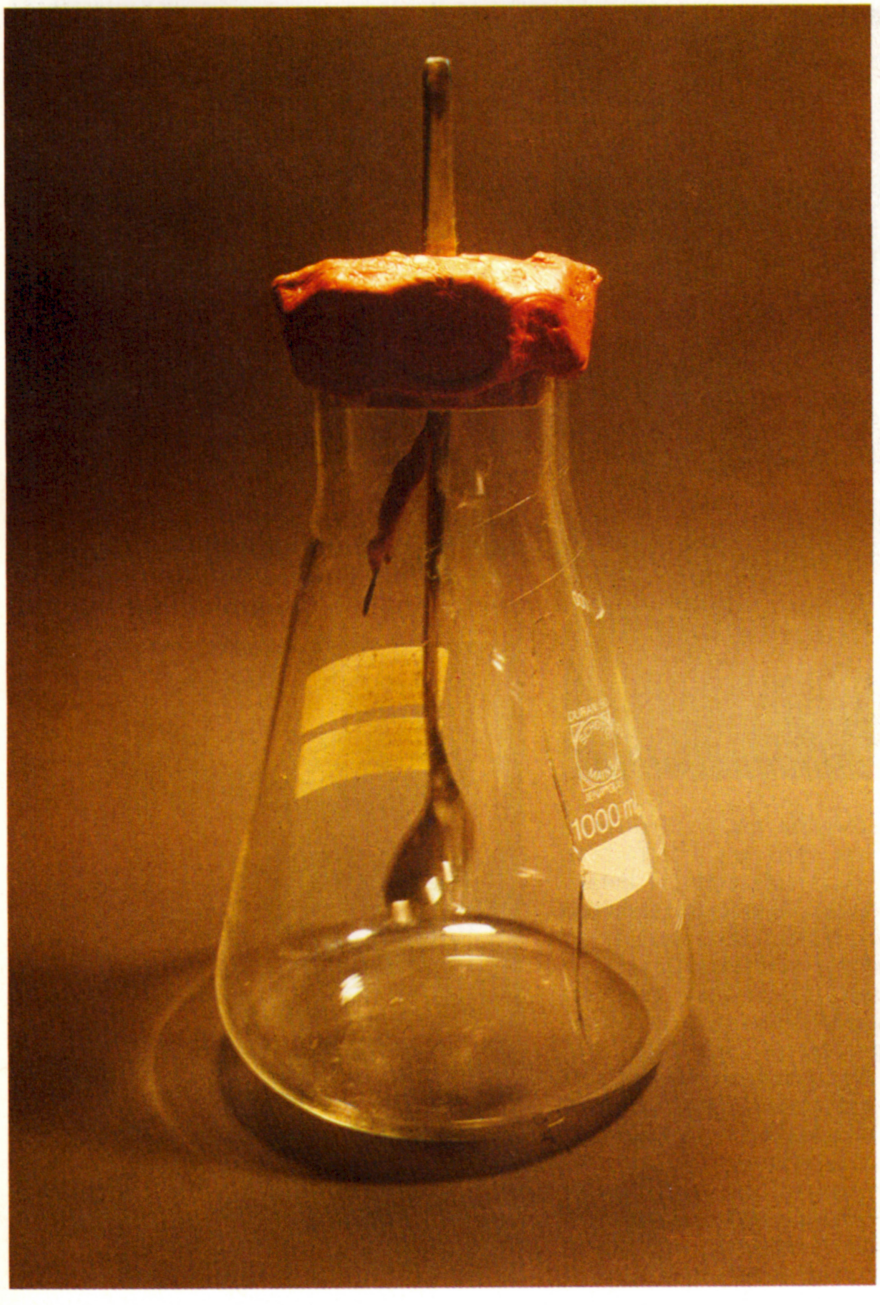
### A break from routine

However, a spoon did break once, though in rather unusual circumstances. Silvio woke up 'seeing' a strange woman, dressed in white, entering his bedroom. He got up and went to his experimental room where he found the table cloth, upon which objects for



Right: Silvio's PK 'miracle'. He broke a restaurant spoon, then 'psi-soldered' it back together with the handle the wrong way round (top) – compare this with the position of the logo on a normal spoon (bottom)

Below: secured inside a well-sealed bottle a spoon swings, apparently set in motion by Silvio's psychic powers. The crack in the flask was found to have been produced from the inside – presumably through the force of the swinging spoon

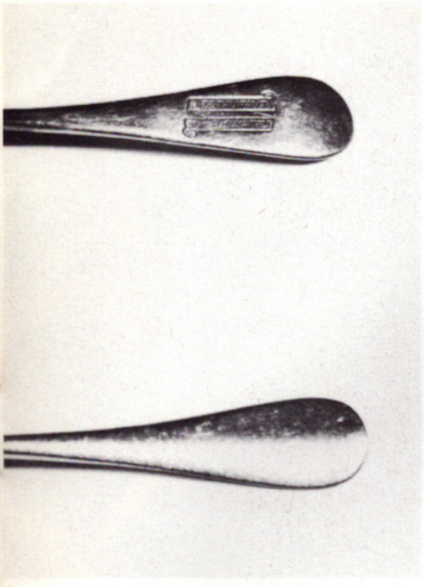


experiment had been lying, torn in pieces. Several pieces of silverware had been deformed into bizarre sculptures or broken into pieces, as was the spoon in the safety bottle. These broken objects, as well as the ones broken during experiments, were later examined at the Max Planck Institute for Metal Research in Stuttgart, which reported that the breakages appeared to be no different from a typical mechanical fracture. The broken spoon inside the safety bottle is particularly interesting: the bottle was cracked and it was certainly arguable that it might have been thrown against something, so breaking the spoon inside. Dr Sommer, a scientist at Freiburg's Frauenhofter Institute for Solid State Mechanics who examined the bottle, concluded from a structural analysis that the crack had been produced by a mechanical force coming from the *inside*. Obviously, when the spoon broke it hit against the glass with great force.

### An angelic visitation?

Another interesting point is that it seemed that Silvio's powers were becoming more varied, that is if it really was Silvio who stopped the church clock opposite his house from ringing after he cursed its noise. Stranger, and much more interesting, is a slide he showed to the Freiburg researchers in June 1975. Silvio had taken a walk through some woods shortly after his mother's death when he suddenly saw an intense ball of light in front of a row of trees. Startled, he raised his camera to photograph it. When the slide was developed there was the outline of a yellowish ball with a 'light figure' resembling an angel with wings in the centre. Photographic experts were not able to discover any evidence that the film had been tampered with.

Many instances of Silvio's PK abilities involve things happening to him, rather than the psychic making them happen – which is most obvious in his metal bending tests. It seems as if the psychic has to be in the right



mood, the right state of mind, and even then he does not know exactly what is going to happen. One incident in particular emphasises the passive character of Silvio's powers. Bernhard Wälti, a technician from Bern University and researcher at the Freiburg Institute, was investigating Silvio's talents. Several times he had succeeded in moving a pencil on the table by PK. The whole experiment was recorded on video. Some hours later, Silvio decided to end the session. Bernhard Wälti began to put away the equipment but there was one spoon still left on the table; the video camera had been left running. Silvio left the room, then re-entered and looked with Wälti at some photographs of a cave, standing about 6 feet (2 metres) away from the table. At this moment the pencil rotated 20° in a counter-clockwise direction as Silvio had tried to make it do, in vain, before the end of the session. This event went unnoticed, and was seen only later when the video tape was played back. Yet this really is not so strange. PK often occurs, not when someone is trying to make it happen, but afterwards, with the sudden release of effort.

The most puzzling incident, though, occurred in the same restaurant where Silvio first discovered his metal-bending faculties. He had deliberately broken some of the restaurant's silverware by PK when one of his friends warned that they might be thrown out if Silvio kept destroying the restaurant's precious property. Why, instead, did he not try to 'psi-solder' the broken cutlery? 'Silvio took the two parts of the spoon in his hands,' one of the friends explained, 'and held them between his fingers. He concentrated, and it did not take long until the spoon was in one piece. Again, he bent the spoon, broke it, and psi-soldered it back together.' Certainly no one believed this, including the Freiburg researchers who were shown such spoons (which in no way differed from normal spoons). Finally, his friends asked him to break the spoon and 'psi-solder' it so that the side with the restaurant's name would be facing upwards, not downwards, as it had been made. And Silvio did it: the spoon that now lies in the archives of the Freiburg Institute is indeed a strange artefact; a curious example of the unexplained or, perhaps, a key to a better understanding of psychokinetic metal bending?

Right: just some of the objects affected by Silvio's PK. Although most famous for his metal bending, he has exhibited other paranormal talents, such as thoughtography. Shortly after his mother's death, Silvio was taking a walk through some woods when he saw a brilliant ball of light in front of some trees. He took a photograph of it – and, much to his surprise, when the film was developed the ball had become a radiant, angel-like figure (below)

# Now you see it...

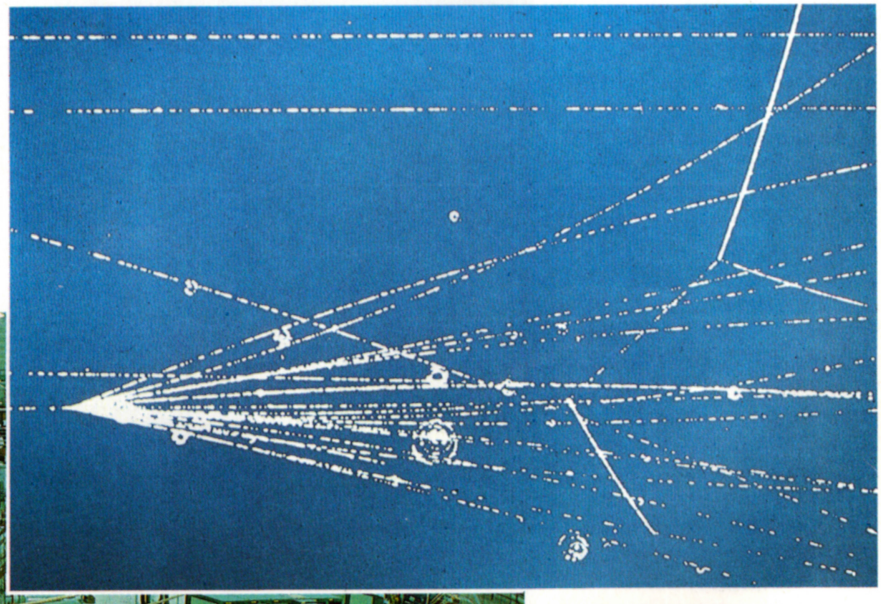
**Some of the most sophisticated attempts to explain psychic phenomena are derived from quantum physics. Among these are the 'observation theories' – which, as JULIAN ISAACS explains, suggest that we are constantly performing psychokinesis**

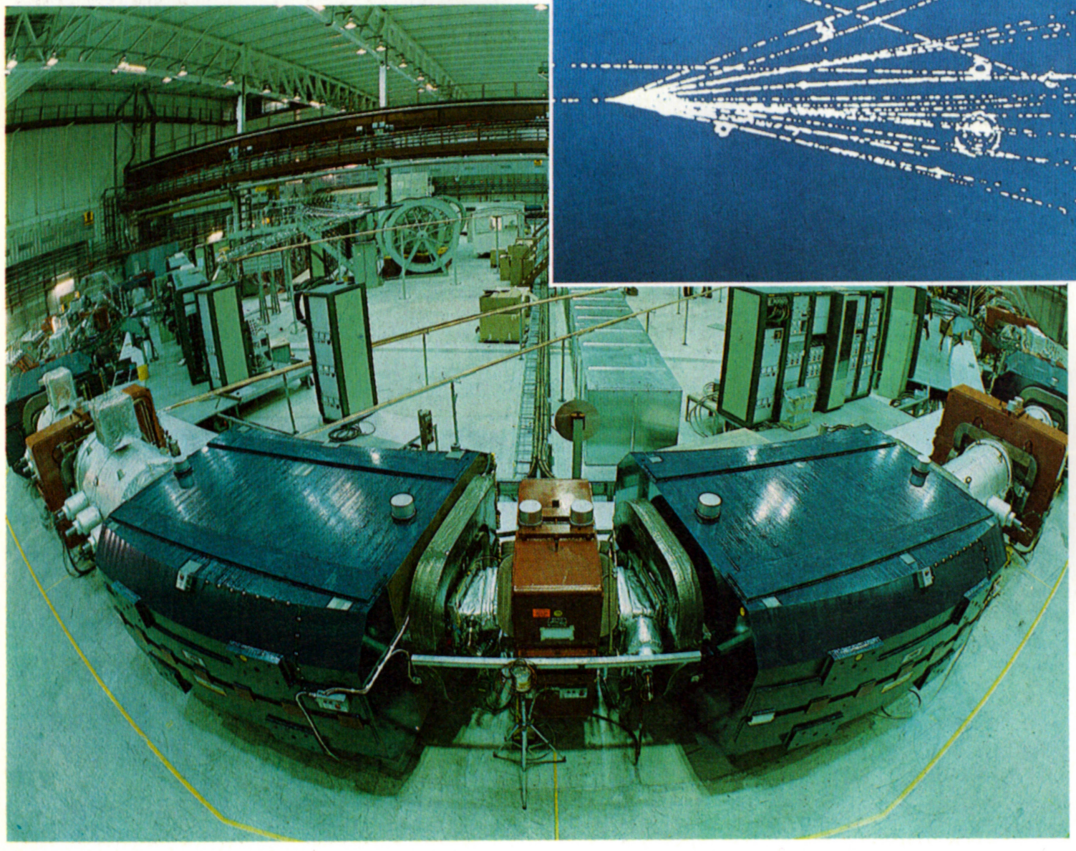
HOW DOES ESP WORK? Many theories – more and less fantastic – have been put forward to explain it; but perhaps the most exciting to have emerged since the mid 1970s are the so-called 'observation theories'. These attempt to explain the physics of ESP from the basic assumption that psychic events are essentially quantum events writ large. The two principal founders of this approach are both physicists – Helmut Schmidt and Evan Harris Walker. Schmidt's theory was originally formulated as an elegant mathematical model of ESP, one that made very few physical assumptions and was not concerned with the physiology or psychology of the psychic. By contrast, the observation theory formulated by Walker *does* concern itself with the physiology and psychology of the psychic; it proposes a new role for the 'hidden variables' that may underlie quantum reactions, and attempts to formulate a comprehensive theory of ESP and PK that embraces a novel view of consciousness and the bizarre world of quantum physics.

Walker's theory is a quantum theoretic model. To understand it even in outline, it is necessary to have just a smattering of quantum physics.

In our everyday lives most of the events we observe involve objects of what is, to us, 'normal' size. These objects are composed of billions upon billions of atoms, and the behaviour of such huge assemblies of atoms irons out the essentially irregular behaviour of tiny entities such as neutrons or electrons.

The behaviour of 'normal' sized objects follows, essentially, the laws of Newtonian physics – unless they are accelerated to near light speeds, when strange relativistic effects begin to appear. We live in a world of 'billiard ball causality'. If a billiard ball cannons into a billiard table cushion at a certain angle and speed, it will follow exactly





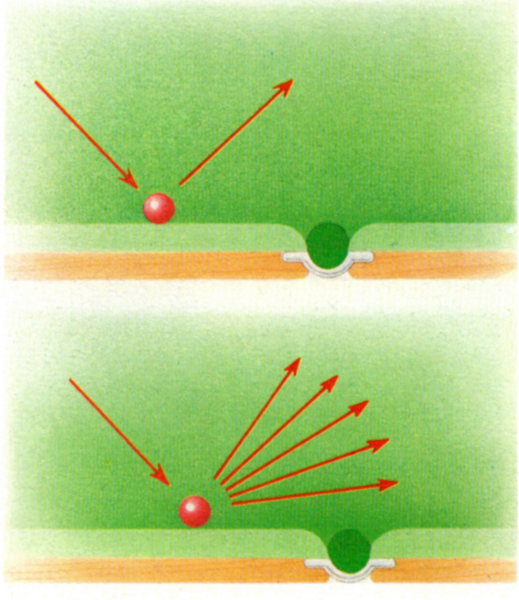
Left: the antiproton accumulator at the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN) at Geneva, Switzerland, and (above) tracks made in a hydrogen bubble chamber by subatomic particles. According to one interpretation of quantum mechanics, events at the quantum level – for instance, subatomic reactions such as those that go on within the antiproton accumulator – remain indeterminate until perceived by a human being – for instance, as particle tracks in cloud chambers

Above: Alex 'Hurricane' Higgins, the British snooker player, lines up a shot. His skill depends on the assumption that a billiard ball, hit at a certain angle at a certain speed, will always rebound in the same way (right, above). This, however, is untrue at the quantum level: imagine that the billiard ball represents an electron and the billiard cushion an atom. Then the electron will bounce off the atom in a number of possible rebound trajectories (right, below) – and it is completely impossible to predict which one it will follow in any given experiment

the same rebound trajectory every time. It is this predictability that enables Hurricane Higgins, the famous British snooker player, to play so well. This would be impossible in the quantum world of atomic particles: if, for instance, the ball were an electron and the cushion were an atom, each shot would have completely unpredictable consequences. The electron would bounce off the atom in a myriad of possible directions.

This outcome is not completely lawless, however, since there is a certain statistical likelihood that the electron will follow any given one of the possible rebound trajectories. If a large number of electrons are fired, one after another, at the atom, the number following each possible trajectory will be in accordance with the probabilities for the interaction – and these do not vary from instance to instance of the interaction. Thus quantum events show statistical predictability – the overall behaviour of large groups is predictable, even if no one can say in advance what any particular quantum particle will do.

This state of affairs holds for all quantum



reactions. The implication for the observation theory of psi is that predictions about psi events can also be only probabilistic, and that the nature of psi is probabilistic. This is very much in accord with the practical results of psi research – an experiment works, then it doesn't, then it does, and so on. The theory may, indeed, help to explain why psi is so elusive and such a slippery fish to catch. So psi may be probabilistic – but it is also well known to transcend the boundaries of time and space. Precognition and telepathy over great distances clearly establish these properties – and any theory of psi must explain them. Walker's does so elegantly, by putting some very strange hypothetical properties of quantum reactions to work in the service of psi.

Albert Einstein – and others – put forward the idea that there may exist a special set of factors that governs the behaviour of quantum systems, apart from the generally accepted, known ones. He called these extra determining factors 'hidden variables', because they are not apparently measurable like the normal factors that affect quantum reactions – energy, mass, charge, and so on. He suggested that, if only we knew the values of these hidden variables governing a given quantum reaction, we could predict exactly what would happen each time, instead of having only statistical predictions available. Some brilliant theoretical work by the mathematical physicist John S. Bell proved that if such hidden variables really do exist, they must be 'non-local'. In physics, 'local' variables are those that can be tied down in time and space as being at a given place at a certain time. 'Non-local' variables can interact across space without limit and – astonishingly – also through time. Systems having non-local properties could, theoretically, interact with each other across space and time in ways that are not possible for systems having only local properties. One bold hypothesis, discussed by David Bohm, one of the leading proponents of hidden variable theory, in his book *Wholeness and the implicate order* (1980), states that all quantum reactions are, in principle, accessible to each other across space and time by interaction through their hidden variables. This provides Walker with exactly the theoretical mechanism he needs to explain the space- and time-transcending features of ESP.

Parapsychology has echoed this view by proposing the existence of a special time-crossing type of PK, which is known as 'retro PK'. The extraordinary properties of retro PK become easier to understand in the context of the 'measurement problem' of quantum physics, which leads us to the heart of the quantum view of reality.

### Quantum problem

During the development of quantum theory in the 1920s and 1930s a problem arose that remains the subject of active controversy within the scientific community. This is the 'measurement problem' of quantum physics. In essence it is as follows.

An examination of the mathematics describing quantum reactions shows, as with the billiard ball example, that the outcomes are probabilistic. But – and here the quantum world takes a lurch away from everyday common sense – the way in which the mathematics of the quantum billiard ball collision is set up means that, until you actually measure the position of the ball, that position is indeterminate, and more: until you measure it, you could regard the ball as simultaneously bouncing back along *all* its possible trajectories!

To provide instant reassurance that physicists are not completely mad, it should be stated immediately that they concede that

whenever one makes a measurement or observation of a quantum system it is always in just one of its possible states, never in the confused state of the hypothetical quantum billiard ball rolling along every one of its possible rebound trajectories.

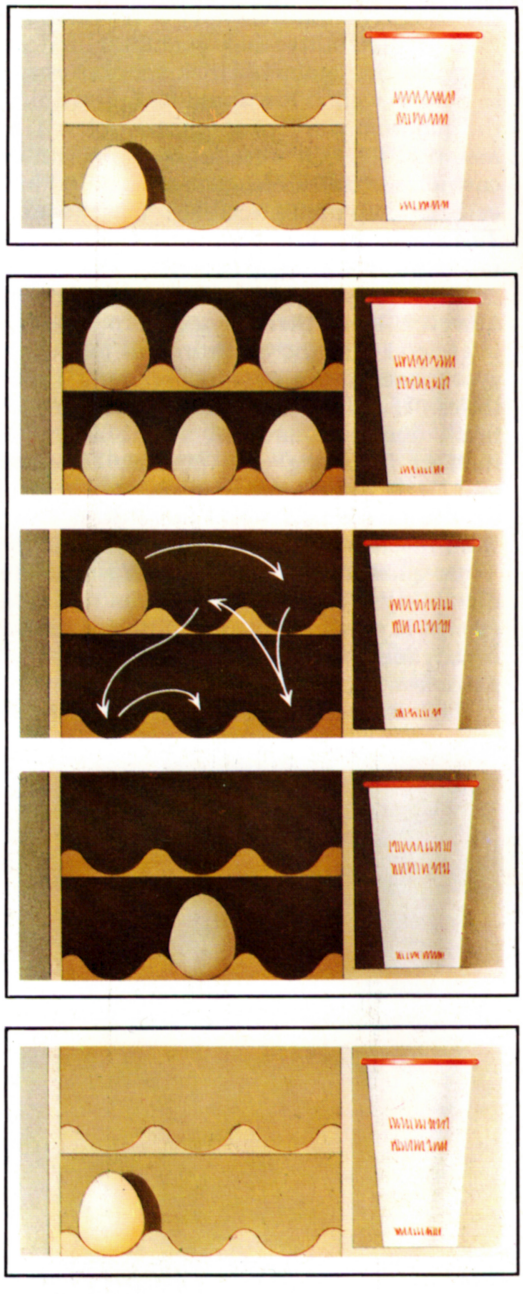
Another analogy may help to clarify this situation. Imagine an egg sitting in a refrigerator egg rack. The egg represents the quantum system. Its states are represented by the places it can occupy in its egg rack. While the refrigerator door is closed, the mathematics says that the position of the egg is indeterminate – that the egg cannot be regarded as occupying any particular compartment of the egg rack – or, indeed, that it simultaneously occupies all the spaces in the rack. But whenever we open the door to make an observation – or measurement – there is the egg sitting as good as gold in only one place! Just as the refrigerator has to be opened deliberately to peek inside, the states of quantum systems remain indeterminate between specific measurements of their state.

### Consciousness and science

What is it that collapses the indeterminate quantum system into only one of its possible states? Various schools of thought have been developed to provide interpretations of the mathematical language describing quantum reactions. One of these, the 'Copenhagen' interpretation developed by the Danish physicist Niels Bohr, suggests that the factor that causes the collapse is observation by a conscious observer. If the measurement were performed by a non-conscious machine, the Copenhagen interpretation states that every possible state would still be present – until a conscious being made an observation of the system. In this way, the Copenhagen interpretation binds human consciousness into the heart of physics, seeing the observer as bringing definite form out of the chaos of the indeterminate quantum state.

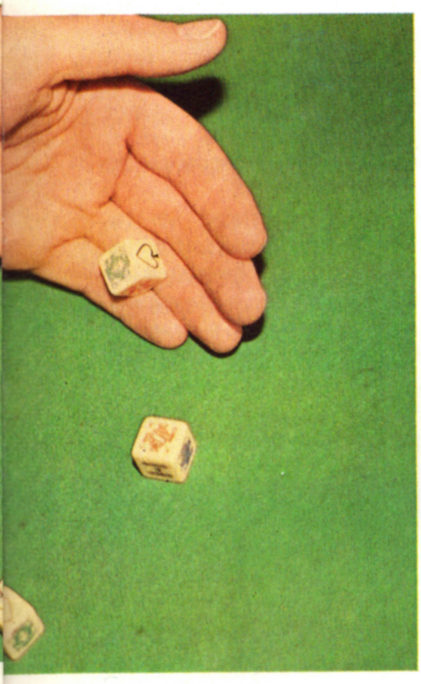
It is only a short step from regarding the observer as able to force the quantum system into definite form to asking whether the observer could not, in principle, decide which particular state the system should be in when observed. Such an action would, of course, be PK. To test this notion, it would be necessary to construct a PK target system in which the target actually consisted of quantum events. But in fact the random event generators (REGS) often used in PK experiments depend on random quantum events – the breakdown of radioactive atoms – that are amplified so as to make them accessible to our senses.

A test of retro PK has been devised by Helmut Schmidt. His PK machine used an REG that derived its random events from the quantal breakdown of radioactive strontium 90 atoms. The radioactive emissions caused by this breakdown were registered on a Geiger counter connected to electronic circuits that, when the counter detected something, produced one of two possible output states. The REG was thus essentially – and in a very sophisticated manner – producing a random alternation between two states that was very similar to those produced by tossing a coin. Over long runs of experiments, left to itself, Schmidt's REG produced, as expected, almost exactly 50 per cent 'heads' and 50 per cent 'tails'. PK agents were asked to will one state to be produced more than the other. Although about 3 per cent bias was generally the greatest to be produced, over runs of tens of thousands of experiments this becomes extremely significant – the probability of such results occurring by chance amounts to around one million million to one. The most crucial aspect of the interpretation of these results is that the PK does not apparently represent an input of energy – it is, instead, an ordering, a slight de-randomising of normally random events.



Left: a thought experiment that may help to clarify the measurement problem of quantum mechanics. Imagine an egg in a refrigerator egg rack. With the refrigerator door open, you note the egg's position (top), then shut the door. Common sense says that the egg must remain in the same position while the door is shut – but quantum mechanics says that the position of the egg is indeterminate. In fact, it could be occupying *any* of the spaces in the rack – or, indeed, *all* of them (middle). But whenever the door is opened and an observation of the egg is made, it is in its original compartment (bottom)

Above: a game of dice. Because, at the subatomic level, all matter is in motion, at that level the exact shape of the die is dependent on random quantum fluctuations. Evan Harris Walker has attempted to prove mathematically that the behaviour of a bouncing die depends not so much upon how it is thrown as upon the quantum fluctuation in its shape. The observation theories suggest that psychokinesis (PK) operates on quantum events – and Walker's alleged proof suggests how



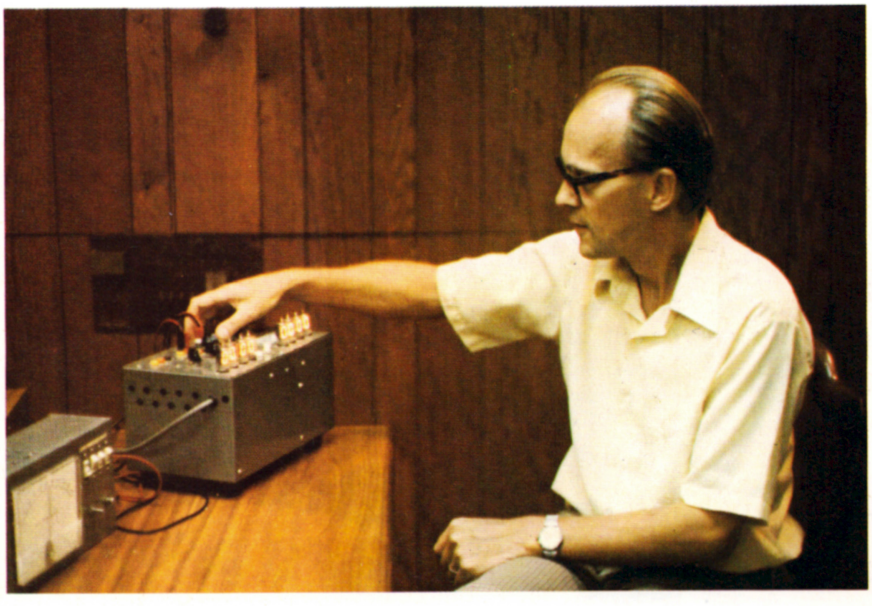
This is equivalent to the addition of *information* to the system, not energy.

The Copenhagen explanation of the 'collapse' of a quantum state by an observer carries with it the implication that a necessary condition of the observer's being able to collapse it is that he does indeed 'measure' the outcome of the collapse of the quantum event in some fashion. And the observation theories agree with this view. The exact way in which this is done does not matter, and may vary – the observer may read a dial, see a light, hear a tone or even read a computer printout. The crucial event, according to the Copenhagen interpretation, is the very first observation made by a human being. On this view, subsequent observations are completely irrelevant because the first observation 'fixes' the quantum outcome. From here on, however, the observation theories differ from the Copenhagen interpretation.

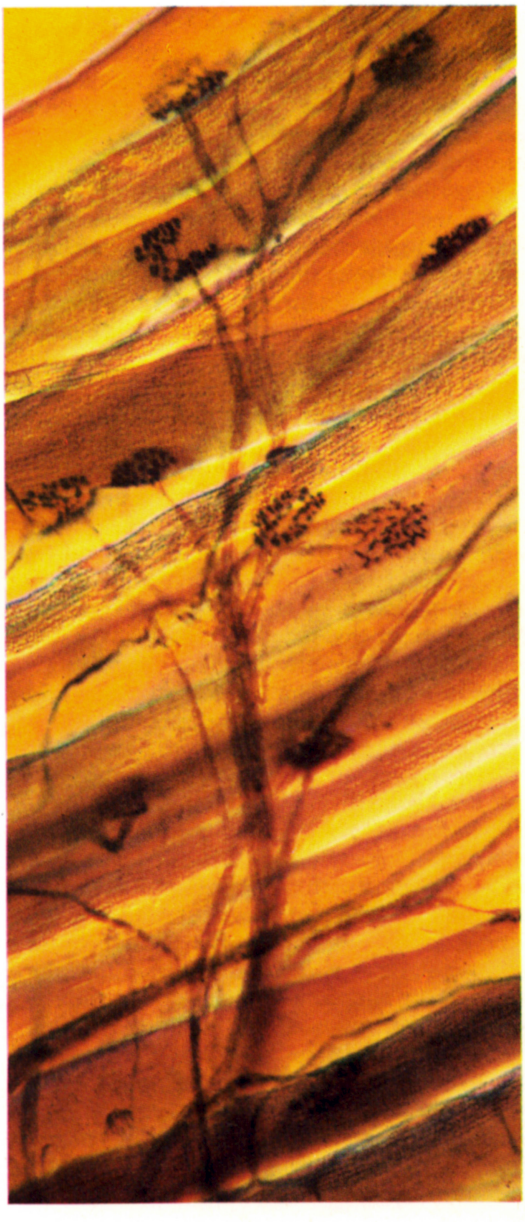
Evan Harris Walker considers the role of the consciousness of the human observer in much more detail than does Schmidt. He thus 'steering' the state of his own brain. Some of this data processing capacity is available to accomplish the 'collapse' of indeterminate quantum states outside the brain. This is what Walker terms the 'will', something that is free to exert PK on the world and is the source of all psi phenomena, including ESP. He maintains that 'consciousness' is thus real, but not an ordinary physical entity, and that it can have real physical effects on the world by means of its power to manipulate the 'hidden variables' of quantum systems.

However – and here Walker departs from the conventional Copenhagen interpretation – because the will can manipulate the non-local 'hidden variables' of quantum systems, its activity is not limited by time or space. This creates the astonishing and counter-intuitive prediction – that it is possible for us to influence *past* events!

*Does retro PK really exist? On page 2718 we describe some controversial experiments*



Above: Helmut Schmidt with one of his PK-testing machines. This is a two-stage random event generator in which the events are generated by radioactive decay, a quantum process that is therefore, Schmidt believes, susceptible to PK influence



Right: human nerve end-plates. Physicist Evan Harris Walker argues that the nerves in the brain are connected on the quantum level – and that consciousness is equivalent to the 'hidden variables' of the quantum state of the brain

believes that three important data processing systems can be ascribed to the human brain. One of these is the data processing system of the non-conscious brain, which is parapsychologically uninteresting. The second data system is that associated with brain processes that give information to the conscious mind. Walker believes that the part of his theory dealing with consciousness is a central and important part of his overall theory. The third system is more complex. Walker argues that the nerves associated with consciousness are interconnected on a quantum level – not just by the normal processes of chemical transmission. This produces a vastly complex quantally connected entity that can be regarded as having one complex quantum state. The consciousness of the person is, according to Walker, equivalent to the 'hidden variables' of the quantum state of the conscious brain cells,

# Past lives: an open book?

**Vivid, detailed and accurate – the tape-recorded narratives of numerous 'past lives' recounted by a young woman under hypnosis were all of these. But, asks MELVIN HARRIS, are these accounts actually historical romances?**

'THE MOST STAGGERING EVIDENCE for reincarnation ever recorded'. That was the claim made for Jeffrey Iverson's book *More lives than one?*, which was based on transcripts of tape recordings made by hypnotically regressed subjects. Iverson had been the producer of a BBC Television programme called *The Bloxham tapes*, screened in 1976 and based on the work of the Cardiff hypnotherapist Arnall Bloxham. Many thousands of readers must have been induced to believe the claim made for the book.

For over six years there was no effective challenge to the publicity claim that the taped accounts were 'so authentic that they can only be explained by the certainty of reincarnation'.

Fortunately, the extravagance of these claims led the present writer to investigate the programme and the book. He decided to concentrate on the six past lives claimed for a young Monmouthshire woman, Jane Evans, since Iverson considered this to be 'the most consistently astonishing case in Bloxham's collection'.

The investigation soon showed that the claims made for the tapes were false, the result of misdirected and inadequate research. Jane Evans's three major accounts proved to have the clearest origins – in her *present* life. Her testimony as Alison, a teenage servant to Jacques Coeur, a French merchant prince of the 15th century, was said to prove that she 'knew a remarkable amount about medieval French history', while in her waking state she said: 'I have never read about Jacques Coeur, I have never even heard the name.'

Jeffrey Iverson even concluded that she could not have picked up the many facts that she produced from the standard histories, such as A. B. Kerr's *Jacques Coeur, merchant prince*. After all, she knew so much about such matters as the intrigues surrounding the King's mistress, Agnes Sorel. Among other things she was able to describe fully the exterior and interior of Coeur's magnificent house – even giving details of the carvings over the fireplace in his main banqueting hall. More surprisingly, she spoke of the carved tomb of Agnes Sorel, which was housed in a church. According to Iverson, this tomb 'had been cast away by French revolutionaries and spent a hundred and sixty-five years, until its rediscovery in 1970, out of sight in a cellar.'

But these claims do not stand up to scrutiny. The truth is that the Sorel tomb has been a tourist attraction since the 1920s at least. It is mentioned in H. D. Sedgwick's *Short history of France* of 1930, and a number of photographs of it have been published.

It is very much the same with Jacques Coeur's house. In fact, this is one of the most thoroughly photographed and filmed houses in all France. Fine, explicit photographs are included in Dame Joan Evans's *Life in medieval France*. There one can see the stone carvings over the fireplace and gain a clear idea of how the place looked, both inside and out. There can be little doubt that Jane Evans has seen these or similar pictures.

And there is strong evidence that the rest of Jane's material was drawn from a source not mentioned by Iverson: a novel called *The moneyman*, by T. B. Costain, published in 1948. It is based on Coeur's life and provides almost all of the flourishes and authentic-sounding touches included by Jane Evans in

Arnall Bloxham, a hypnotherapist practising in Cardiff, at work. He came to national attention when a television programme and a book described the hypnotic regressions that he conducted and his claims that they represented genuine past lives of his subjects

Below: Agnes Sorel, here depicted as the Virgin, was mistress of Charles VII of France. She figured in Jane Evans's 'recollections' of the 15th century

Below right: Louis de Wohl's novel *The living wood* is undoubtedly the source of the details in Jane Evans's 'memories' of her life in Roman Britain. She would most probably have encountered the British edition, *The empress Helena*

her 'past life memories'. Furthermore, the novel avoids all mention of Coeur's wife and family – and Jane Evans does exactly the same.

The view that Jane Evans's tapes were simply the result of cryptomnesia could still, perhaps, be brushed aside as mere speculation, if it were not for the confirmation provided by the vetting of her two remaining major accounts of past lives.

As Rebecca, the Jewess of York, she was supposed to have met her death during the massacre of 1190. At that time, most of the Jewish community died in the York Castle keep, but Rebecca's death came in the cellar of a church where she had taken refuge. A formidable legend has grown up around this cellar episode. It has been claimed that the church was positively identified as St Mary's, Castlegate, and that a crypt was actually discovered there after Jane's regression.

The truth is that the original television

programme script stated that there were *three* possible churches that could qualify as the place of refuge. St Mary's was shown, but it was chosen as the place in which to film simply because it was the most convenient: at the time it was being converted to a museum. It was this conversion that led to the uncovering of an aperture under the chancel. For believers this was, naturally, a medieval crypt and proof of Rebecca's story. But it is likely that this small vault in fact dates from well after the massacre of the Jews.

In any case, the furore over the 'crypt' is irrelevant, since the Rebecca regression is clearly a fantasy. It is an amalgamation of at least two different stories of persecution taken from widely separated centuries.

The proof that we are dealing with a fantasy lies in the historical inaccuracies found in the tale. Rebecca repeats four times that the Jewish community in York were forced to wear yellow badges – 'circles over our hearts'. But the Jewish badge was not introduced until the following century, and even then the English pattern consisted of two oblong white strips of cloth, representing the tablets of Moses. The yellow circle was, in fact, the badge worn in France and Germany after 1215. This is one aspect of Jewish history over which there are no legitimate doubts whatsoever.

### Ghetto that never was

Then a group of absurdities were discovered in passages from the tapes that were *excluded* from both the book and the film. In these revealing passages Rebecca repeatedly speaks of living in the ghetto in the north of York. This ghetto was a quarter without street names, where only the rich Jews lived, and she pointedly mentions a poor Jew who could afford to live only in 'the middle of York in a street called Coney Street'.

Now there never was a special Jewish quarter in York: the Jews were scattered in Micklegate, Fossgate, Bretgate, Feltergayle and near the centre in Jewbury. And the idea that a Jew would live outside the ghetto because of poverty is ludicrous. Even if he did, he would not live in Coney Street, which was, in truth, the choice place for many of the rich Jews – including Josce, the head of their community.

This means, inevitably, that Jane Evans has the ability to store vivid accounts subconsciously and combine and edit these creatively – to the point where she becomes one of the characters involved. The clinching proof that this is so is provided by her regression to the life of a Roman wife, Livonia – for this is the purest of all, based on one source only. On hearing this tape Professor Brian Hartley, an authority on Roman Britain, commented: 'She knew some quite remarkable historical facts, and numerous published works would have to be consulted if anyone tried to prepare the outline of such a story.' The professor is right: careful

**Further reading**

Morey Bernstein, *The search for Bridey Murphy*, Doubleday (New York) 1965
Jeffrey Iverson, *More lives than one?*, Souvenir Press 1976
Ian Wilson, *Reincarnation*, Penguin 1982

Left: English Jews were made to wear a badge representing the tablets of Moses during the 13th century. But Jane Evans, as 'Rebecca, Jewess of York', described the badge as a circle and ascribed it to the 12th century

Right: Micklegate Bar, at the entrance to one of the areas of York where Jews lived in the 12th century. But there was no true ghetto – contrary to Jane Evans's account

Below: this figure of a Roman centurion called Facilis, at Colchester, was Louis de Wohl's inspiration for his character of the same name in *The living wood*

research had gone into the making of Jane's story, but it was undertaken by Louis de Wohl, author of the novel *The living wood*, published in 1947. Jane's life as Livonia is taken direct from that novel. Two brief comparisons will show just how.

Livonia's tale opened in Britain during the late fourth century AD. She described the garden of a house owned by the legate Constantius. She named his wife as Lady Helena, his son as Constantine. She described his son being taught the use of shield, sword and armour by his military tutor, Marcus Favonius Facilis. This entire sequence is taken from the novel: Constantine trains in the use of arms and armour under his military tutor Marcus Favonius, called Facilis 'because everything was easy to him'.

Livonia then described a visit by the historical character Allectus. He brought Constantius an urgent message from Rome, but despite the urgency he had 'stopped at Gessoriacum to see Carausius, who is in charge of the fleet'. This section too is drawn from the novel: there the visit leads up to the take-over of rule in Britain by Carausius, aided by Allectus. In the same way *every single piece of information* given out by Jane Evans can be traced to de Wohl's fictional account. She uses his fictional sequences in exactly the same order and even speaks of his fictional characters, such as Curio and Valerius, as if they were real people.

There are two minor differences worth noting: these involve her editing faculty.

First she takes a slight character, Titus, a Christian soldier willing to die for his faith, and recasts him as a tutor to Constantine. But all Titus's feelings and actions are those of de Wohl's character Hilary. Hilary is converted to Christianity, ordained as a priest and killed during a violent campaign against his faith.

Second, Jane Evans takes Livonia, an insignificant character in the book, described as 'a charming creature with pouting lips and smouldering eyes', and amalgamates her with Helena. A composite Livonia, recast as the wife of Titus, then emerges. This new character is able to act both as an observer and as someone who voices Helena's sentiments – thus making the story that much fuller and much easier to relate.

This feat of editing reveals a little of the psychology behind these fantasies. For Hilary is the eminently desirable male in the book, described as having 'a beautiful honest face with the eyes of a dreamer'. He is also secretly in love with Helena. As Titus he becomes the lover of Livonia of the pouting lips and smouldering eyes – in other words of Jane Evans herself. And there we have the combustible material that warmed a young girl's daydreams – all inspired by an exciting historical novel.

Regrettably, Jane Evans has refused to co-operate in any way in this re-investigation. But all those who have studied the files of source material (including Professor Hartley and another academic consulted in the television programme, Professor R. B. Dobson of York University – and, to his credit, Jeffrey Iverson) now accept that the once impressive tapes are proof of cryptomnesia – and nothing more remarkable than that!

*continued from back cover*

do not accept them in practice. The late Christopher Evans was effectively the spokesman for this species, in his capacity as the BBC's 'resident sceptic', called upon endlessly in the days – not so long past – when both radio and television producers were discouraged from putting on programmes about the paranormal unless the sceptical viewpoint was emphasised.

Nobody has emerged to take Evans's place; but there are plenty of possible substitutes, as this type of scepticism still often finds expression in the columns of the *New Scientist*. For that matter, it is far from uncommon in the Society for Psychical Research (SPR), in which there are a number of members who regard it as their major function to show that evidence for ESP or PK, whether 'anecdotal' or obtained in laboratory experiments, is flawed.

The still common view of the SPR as a home for nutty academics who have been conned, or have conned themselves, into becoming believers in the paranormal could hardly be further from reality. Even those members who tacitly accept the existence of, say, telepathy or metal-bending often themselves suffer from marked symptoms of scepticism.

These symptoms overlap and interact, but for convenience they can be put under three main headings, the first of which I have dubbed 'scepticemia'. Some psychical researchers are so far gone that they have never been able to bring themselves to accept any case that they have been involved with as genuine. This applies particularly to poltergeist hauntings; as there is always the risk that somebody is playing practical jokes, the temptation is to find an excuse to bring in a negative verdict, and leave.

**Double takes and second thoughts**

The second symptom, 'retrocognitive dissonance', is a more subtle version of the first. Time and again, investigators who *have* accepted a haunting, or the results of a telepathy experiment, or the genuineness of a medium, have backed away later, when the initial impact has receded, and they begin to wonder whether they might not have been duped after all.

The third symptom has become increasingly common since the mid 20th century: 'protocolitis'. Basically this means a refusal to accept any evidence for the paranormal except those results that have been obtained in laboratory work, with strict protocols organised in advance, and rigorous controls employed. This effectively wipes out the great bulk of the historical evidence for psychical phenomena, along with all our present experiences of spontaneous psi.

Taken together, these three have had a powerfully destructive effect on psychical research. And throughout the SPR's history, it is possible to argue that much of its best work has been in demolition rather than in construction.

No wonder, then, that the public is confused. Recent opinion polls show that the great majority of people of all ages – well over two thirds of each sample taken – accept the reality of ESP. In other words, they accept the reality of phenomena that orthodox science cannot account for – which is basically what psychical research is about: to secure the admission that there *are* such phenomena, and to show that they represent a suitable area for investigation.

**Alarms and confusions**

But scepticism breeds confusion in two main ways. One is to create alarm about the possibility of reason being overturned by a 'black tide of mud', as Sigmund Freud described the paranormal. Freud accepted the reality of telepathy, but he feared a revival of superstition, black magic and the like. Sceptics trade on this, warning that to accept telepathy may be the thin end of the anti-rationalist wedge.

Here, sceptics find willing allies among materialist scientists. The existence of unexplained forces is the last thing that a scientist wants to have to allow for. Psychologists tend to be particularly ready to listen to a sceptic because, as the author of one of the early psychology textbooks, Alfred Jodl, warned, the existence of telepathy – were it to be confirmed – would necessitate 'a complete revision of fundamental principles'. And physicists, even if they can no longer dismiss PK as an impossibility, are understandably anxious that it should not disrupt their everyday work.

The most fervent allies of scepticism, though, are conjurers who realise they would be upstaged by *real* magicians. The egregious James Randi has even arranged for bogus psychics to disrupt psychical research projects by using tricks. What would scientists who applaud this kind of deception think if a psychical researcher wrecked their experiments by, say, mixing up test tubes when they were not looking?

Power corrupts; scepticism corrodes. It can become one of the saddest forms of mental illness when it takes the form of snide delight in 'exposing' a psychic.

# Never, never, never, never

**By its very nature the world of psychical research gives rise to astonishing claims – and bitter accusations of fraud. Perhaps a little scepticism is a healthy thing but, maintains BRIAN INGLIS, it can become so obsessive that it is a form of mental disorder, stopping the sufferer from seeing the world as it really is**

The term 'sceptic' is commonly used, in the context of parapsychology, about anybody who declines to accept that paranormal phenomena exist. But scepticism takes a number of different forms, and some of them border on mental disorder; like mental disorders, they can be categorised – although, being the product of confusion, they are often themselves mixed up.

Sceptics on the extreme, or rationalist, wing argue simply that there are certain laws of nature that cannot be broken; and proceed from there to dismiss, say, extra-sensory perception (ESP) and psychokinesis (PK) on the grounds that a mind cannot communicate with another mind, let alone affect matter, because this would break the laws. And that simply cannot – ever – happen.

A century ago this was a common argument. The great von Helmholtz, physicist and physiologist, told Sir William Barrett that, as he could not accept the possibility that thought could be transmitted between one person and another 'independently of the recognised channels of sensation', he would decline to believe in telepathy even on the testimony of the entire body of members of the Royal Society – and even, he insisted, *if he experienced it himself.*

This line of argument has become untenable, however, largely owing to the discoveries of the quantum physicists (see page 801). They have found that nuclear particles 'communicate' at a distance, without having any recognised 'channels of sensation'; and that they also indulge in 'translocation' – they can move from one orbit to another without, apparently, traversing the intervening space – much as St Philip the Evangelist did, when he was miraculously carried from one region to another.

It can, of course, be claimed that what happens at the level of the electron or neutrino is not necessarily applicable to human beings. But it cannot now be claimed that communication at a distance and translocation are contrary to the laws of nature – unless the quantum physicists are mad.

There has consequently been a shift, recently, to a different type of rationalism, based on the teachings of the 18th-century Scots philosopher David Hume. Hume did not assert that supernatural (as they were still described) phenomena were *a priori* impossible, because they broke natural laws. Rather, he argued, they were impossible because the laws of nature were themselves based on the 'firm and unalterable experience of mankind'. Men must die; lead cannot float in the air; fire consumes wood. It would be miraculous if anybody became immortal, if lead floated, or if wood became incombustible; but these things never happened, and 'as a uniform experience amounts to a proof', here was proof 'against the existence of any miracle'.

Hume remains a kind of secular patron saint of rationalists; yet the absurdity of his thesis ought to be obvious. Before magnetism was discovered, it could just as readily have been argued that iron could not float: yet with the help of a magnet, iron actually levitates. In any case, there are tens of thousands of reports of 'miracles' of various kinds; it is possible to assert that they are all bogus, but it cannot be asserted that they are actually contrary to human experience. Today, telepathic communication is deemed a very common experience, to judge from opinion polls. It may be explained away with the help of all the stock rationalisations – coincidence, wishful thinking, and so on; but the sheer weight of evidence is beginning to make such rationalisations look distinctly shop-soiled.

### Save our sceptics?

As a result, sceptics of this type are also becoming an endangered species. There is C.E.M. Hansel, professor of psychology at the University of Swansea, whose books on ESP represent the most detailed exposition of the rationalist case; and there is Nicolas Walter, the tireless campaigner on behalf of the rationalist/humanist alliance – who must hold the record for letters to newspapers, rallying the faithful to the cause. But with the possible exception of Sir Freddie Ayer, they now have no famous names on their side – no more Bertrand Russells!

By far the largest category of sceptics is composed of individuals who accept, in theory, that paranormal phenomena *may* exist, but who

*continued overleaf*